United Nations S/PV.8401

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8401st meeting
Thursday, 15 November 2018, 9.45 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Mielus
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2018/922)

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18-38144 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2018/922)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/1025, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/922, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): We are about to vote on a technical draft resolution (S/2018/1025) to renew the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for one month. It is indeed a technical need so as to allow one of the members of the Security Council to take the necessary steps in line with its domestic legislation in order to vote on the draft resolution that has been under discussion by the members of the Council in recent weeks. The negotiations on the essence of a new MINUSCA mandate have essentially concluded. As penholder, and with a view to facilitating consensus, we have sought tirelessly, in the framework of expanded consultations, the most exacting balance among the different positions voiced. I believe we have achieved that balance.

That draft resolution, to which I will return at the time of its adoption, includes several important elements relating to MINUSCA and the support the Mission will be able to provide to the authorities of the Central African Republic in their efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in the country. In that regard, I would first point to maintaining MINUSCA's format and robust mandate — clearly an essential point. I would also refer to the political support that MINUSCA will be able to extend to the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, as a unique framework for facilitating direct and inclusive dialogue between the Government and armed groups. There must be no ambiguity as to the central place of that African Union Initiative, as our draft resolution underscores. Lastly, I would refer to the additional support that MINUSCA could provide to the Central African authorities to extend State authority throughout the country's territory — that being, as well all know, the key to success.

We therefore hope that the draft resolution to renew MINUSCA's mandate for a year can be put to a vote quickly and that the Council will be able to extend it its unanimous support, in the interest of the Central African Republic and all Central Africans. That is the only aim that guides France, as it should be for all the other members of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2446 (2018).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation takes note of the decision by the Security Council to act under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to extend the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 December 2018, on the basis of resolution 2387 (2017). Côte d'Ivoire welcomes this Council decision, which makes it possible for MINUSCA to continue its activities in a country where the magnitude of the security, political and humanitarian challenges requires the international community's unconditional support. In our capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, my country calls on all Council members to act in a spirit of compromise with a view to constructive participation in the context of our adoption of the full draft resolution renewing MINUSCA's mandate. Côte d'Ivoire firmly believes that consensus on the draft resolution's relevant provisions will reflect our support to the Government and the people of the Central African Republic in their efforts to emerge from crisis with the aim of restoring lasting peace and stability in our brother country.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): We would like to thank France for its leadership in facilitating the negotiations for the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). In recent weeks we have had extensive and important discussions on the situation in the Central African Republic, including on how to improve MINUSCA's role in the political process and its mandate to protect civilians. The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully supports the draft text that France initially put in blue. It maintains the Mission's troop ceiling and priority tasks, as well as its logistical support to the Central African Republic armed forces. We hope it will be possible for the Council to adopt that text as a draft resolution very soon. The people of the Central African Republic deserve the Council's unanimous support.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have just supported a so-called technical extension of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic for one month. Today the Council has maintained unity on this issue, which is very encouraging. For that to continue to be the case in future, the French penholders will have to make major additional efforts if they still want to revisit their initial ambitious draft, which we have been discussing for the past month.

That is quite easy to do. The starting point must be an understanding that there is work in the Central African Republic for all who genuinely want to help the country finally get back on its feet, especially given that France and our Western partners generally have repeatedly told us that the Central African Republic is not an area to be competed over but rather a platform for collaborating on finding solutions that can extricate the country from its crisis. Now we have to live up to that premise and set aside reluctance based on past experiences, egotism and parochial national interests. Anyone who approaches the issue with good intentions should have no hidden agendas or fear of competition. Those are the principles that guide us. We are proactively helping the Central African Republic with the knowledge and support of the leadership and people of the country, and we would like our efforts to be duly reflected in the French draft.

The fact that the concerns of our United States colleagues were meticulously and quickly addressed inspires optimism. Since their views were heard, please listen to ours as well. We are ready to continue to work on the draft text in a spirit of mutual respect so that a month from now, it will not be necessary to jeopardize the unity of the Council, which is so important to us and our friends in the Central African Republic, on the topic we are discussing today.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me say that the United Kingdom continues to support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which carries out essential work in stabilizing the political and security situation in the Central African Republic. That is critical to bringing about peace through the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and ensuring the well-being of the people of the Central African Republic. I would just like to highlight and express my agreement with the views of the representative of France with respect to the importance of that African Union initiative.

We understand that the domestic legal processes of the United States required it to request an extension for the existing MINUSCA mandate. We appreciate France's flexibility on the matter and its efforts to ensure a consensus in the Security Council on the continuity of Mission operations by facilitating the temporary extension of the mandate. We look forward to coming together to adopt the new mandate within the next month.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Ambassador Delattre for France's efforts to find compromise language on a difficult draft resolution and to adopt a technical rollover (resolution 2446 (2018).

The United States supports the addition of a new task in the next mandate that would enable the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to provide limited logistical support to the Central African military, police and gendarmerie, using existing resources. We thank the members of the Council for supporting the technical rollover, which will give the United States the time required for full notification within our Government, as required by United States law.

The United States has also expressed concern about language in the draft resolution regarding the International Criminal Court, which was addressed by the penholder in the text put into the blue and to be adopted after the technical rollover has expired.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

China is in favour of resolution 2446 (2018), which the Council just adopted. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic has played an important role in maintaining peace and stability in the Central African Republic, and China supports the renewal of its mandate.

At the same time, the efforts of the relevant parties of the international community to promote peace and security in the country must be recognized and acknowledged and the legitimate concerns of all the parties, particularly the Central African Republic, given full attention and taken into account. The resolution should help forge consensus in the Council, maintain its unity and send a positive message about the international community's support to the Government of the Central African Republic. Only by doing so can we help to maintain lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 9.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8402

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8402nd meeting

Thursday, 15 November 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/1006)

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18-38138 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/1006)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel; Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service.

Mr. Buyoya and Mr. Serrano are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako and Brussels, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/1006, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Before I give the floor to the briefers, I wish to remind them of the time limits.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Council today, together with His Excellency President Buyoya, Permanent Secretary Sidikou and Deputy Secretary-General Serrano, with whom we enjoy a strong and fruitful partnership. It is a pleasure for me to update the Council on the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the international support provided to it, including by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I shall also identify the challenges encountered to date and list the measures that we believe are necessary for the success of the Force, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017).

The security situation in the Sahel remains extremely concerning and the recent trends detailed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006) are worrying. The increase in terrorist attacks against civilians, Government officials and security and defence forces, particularly in north-eastern Burkina Faso and the Niger, shows that the terrorist threat in the Sahel is spreading. As always, civilians are paying the highest price. Schools are closed, basic social services are no longer delivered, potential investments are being abandoned due to the climate of terror and fear that is taking hold there. This situation robs young people who are without prospects for a better future and real opportunities of hope, thereby creating a fertile ground for terrorism to thrive. If we do not take forceful and coordinated measures forthwith to prevent terrorism, that scourge will spread even faster and further, and it will become even more difficult to address.

In this hostile environment, the operationalization of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel has not been easy. Over the past six months, it has faced serious obstacles, but has also overcome significant challenges. The attack on its headquarters in Sévaré on 29 June was a striking reminder of how well informed, prepared and determined terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region are. The attack destroyed critical infrastructure and communications equipment, resulting in the temporary suspension of Joint Force operations. However, G-5 Sahel member States and Joint Force leaders have persevered in the face of what could have been a fatal blow to this important initiative.

I take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Commander of the Joint Force, Brigadier General Dacko, for his service and to congratulate the new Force Commander, Brigadier General Hanena, on his appointment. I commend his leadership and the swift actions he has taken to ensure that efforts to operationalize the Joint Force are actively pursued. The decision taken by the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee on 25 October in Niamey to relocate the Joint Force headquarters to Bamako should help to restore the momentum of the Joint Force.

It is now essential that the Joint Force resume its operations without delay. I therefore urge the leaders of the Joint Force to spare no effort to finalize the planning efforts and launch its next operations as soon as possible. That will send a strong signal to terrorist groups seeking to undermine State authority and destabilize the region, and will strengthen the

confidence of the G-5's international partners. We also call on the G-5 Sahel to step up its efforts to coordinate the forces sent under G-5 framework and to further clarify the concept of operations of the Joint Force. The cross-border operations of the Joint Force, as part of the first phase of the concept of operations, are important and should be continued. But in the long term, only an operation with a regional mandate and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities among the Joint Force, national armies and international forces will be effective in combating terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Sahel. We therefore encourage G-5 Sahel member States to agree on a common vision of the final status of the Joint Force.

(*spoke in English*)

Now more than ever, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force depends on the support of the international community. Remarkable progress has been in made in the area of force generation. The G-5 Sahel member States have deployed more than 80 per cent of their troops, manned all sector headquarters and completed the transfer of authority for all command posts. That is no small feat just over 12 months after the Joint Force reached initial operational capacity. However, much remains to be done. The Joint Force has still not attained full operational capacity. Major equipment shortfalls, capability gaps, insufficient infrastructure and a lack of secured operational bases continue to delay its full operationalization.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the European Union, which has done an outstanding job in matching the Joint Force's needs with corresponding donor pledges and has also been an important donor to the Joint Force since its inception. Contributions by all the donors, which came swiftly forward, were instrumental in the start-up phase of the Joint Force. However, to date almost 50 per cent of pledges made have not been earmarked, let alone disbursed. We therefore urge donors to deliver on their commitments and to provide the financial support the Joint Force so urgently requires.

MINUSMA continues to face a funding gap of almost $30 million to provide the support it was mandated to provide to the Joint Force pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017). While the Mission responded immediately and favourably to all of the Joint Force's requests for life-support consumables and transportation, it has lacked the funding to provide engineering support for the enhancement and fortification of the Joint Force's camp, which remains the biggest obstacle to its operationalization. Indeed, the Mission has undertaken all required assessments, presented scopes of work for four camps on Malian territory, and stands ready to begin engineering support as soon as the required resources become available. However, in the absence of funding there is not much the Mission can do.

That points to the shortcomings of the current support model for the Joint Force, despite the best intentions of all actors involved. The Secretary-General has stated repeatedly that the Joint Force requires a different support mechanism, namely, a dedicated support office funded through assessed contributions. That would allow for more predictable and sustainable planning of support measures to permit the extension of support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force beyond Malian territory and enable MINUSMA to focus exclusively on mandate implementation. I also echo the calls of the Secretary-General and the Heads of States of the G-5 Sahel a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations for the Joint Force.

We are encouraged by progress made by the Joint Force in the operationalization of the police component and the establishment of its compliance framework. Investigations into the two incidents in Boulékéssi, and the transparency and cooperation demonstrated by both Malian authorities and the Joint Force's leadership are commendable. Respect for human rights is integral to achieving the operational aims of the Joint Force and a prerequisite for the overall success of that initiative. In fact, it will stand a chance only if the people of the Sahel are confident in the actions of their defence and security forces. We therefore call on the Force leadership to take advantage of the technical support provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to consolidate the achievements that have already been made on important dimensions of its compliance framework.

Finally, any security initiative in the Sahel can be successful only if it is part of a larger, more holistic strategy for the region that addresses the underlying causes of instability while seeking political solutions to prioritize inclusive socioeconomic development. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, in conjunction with the G-5 Sahel's priority investment plan, provide the framework in which the Joint Force must be embedded. We welcome the signature of a partnership agreement between the G-5 Sahel secretariat

and the Sahel Alliance in Niamey on 30 October, which was an important step to enhance coordination and cooperation in the Sahel.

Furthermore, we echo the Secretary-General's calls on the G-5 Sahel member States to urgently create the Joint Force's support group to provide a forum for member States, donors and partners of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The African Union has a key role to play in that regard. Under its chairmanship, the support group could ensure linkages with other regional and political initiatives. We call on G-5 Sahel countries to continue to address the critical governance shortfalls in the region that provide a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. The Malian peace process remains critical in that regard as a cornerstone of political efforts to address long-standing grievances.

It is our shared and collective responsibility to ensure that the Joint Force succeeds. As such, I call on each and every one of us to do our part. The United Nations remains deeply committed to this important initiative.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), I thank the Security Council for convening this briefing dedicated to the Joint Force of our regional organization. I also offer my profound thanks to Secretary-General Guterres for his biannual report (S/2018/1006) to the Security Council.

Six months ago, I provided the members of Security Council with an overview of the situation in the Sahel (see S/PV.8266). Since then, we have seen an increased level of insecurity in certain G-5 Sahel countries that is cause for alarm. On 29 June, a terrorist attack destroyed the G-5 Sahel Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré, Mali. That event marked a halt to the operationalizing of the Joint Force, which enjoys the logistical support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The Joint Force is clearly facing new challenges, including a lack of equipment, shortcomings at the logistical level and a lack of financing. Nevertheless, progress has been seen in the establishment of the compliance framework through the implementation of mechanisms aimed at ensuring respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. That work is being carried out with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and MINUSMA and is focused primarily on the police component of the Joint Force and on monitoring operations and investigations to identify those responsible whenever an incident occurs.

A regional conference on impunity, access to justice and human rights in the context of emerging threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel was held in Niamey on 10 September, which further demonstrated the critical importance accorded to respect for human rights in the comprehensive approach put in place to respond to the crisis in the Sahel.

Concerning the financing of the Joint Force, I must speak frankly about the gravity of the situation. On 23 February, the international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels concluded with pledges. To date, we are far from the €414 million that were pledged. We have received the equivalent of €17.9 million in equipment, services and valuable technical assistance from partners, such as the African Union and the European Union. However, the G-5 Sahel trust fund received pledged money only from and Rwanda and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. I am pleased and grateful to announce that yesterday the United Arab Emirates disbursed €10 million to our trust fund. On behalf of the people of the Sahel, in particular the G-5 Sahel, I thank that country.

At the initiative of the President of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, no effort has been spared to ensure the efficient management of the funds that have been received. The G-5 Sahel Council of Ministers has adopted the statutes guiding the support committee for the trust fund. Based in Nouakchott, that structure will facilitate the disbursement of the trust fund's resources and will be operational in the coming weeks.

With regard to the command of the Joint Force, a new duo — Brigadier General Hanena Ould Sidi of Mauritania and General Oumar Bikimo of Chad, appointed by the Heads of State — has taken office. They are at the helm of an arrangement consisting of the Headquarters, now in Bamako, and three forward command posts located in the west, the centre and the east. Upon assuming office, the new leadership began work on improving stewardship of the Joint Force and preparing for new operations. The Force has already

conducted six operations. However, our brave troops, who stand ready to sacrifice themselves, will not be able to achieve results without the timely provision of the necessary means.

As you have emphasized the important role of multilateralism in conflict resolution, Mr. President, the Sahel is experiencing a multidimensional crisis that illustrates the relevance of such an approach. Environmental and socioeconomic challenges make up the backdrop to which many factors undermining our stability have been added. Some G-5 Sahel countries are facing high levels of tension leading, inter alia, to the closure of schools, health-care facilities, police stations and courts. A large segment of young people, who make up the majority of the population, finds itself totally helpless, and unfortunately sees only two obvious options for the foreseeable future — either to flee through illegal immigration, with all the horrors it entails, or to embrace the hollow causes championed by terrorist groups that are only too happy to profit from the surrounding misery, while promising remuneration gleaned from the many forms of trafficking in which they engage. Given such a situation, it must be acknowledged that its development will lead to a further deterioration on the ground if we do not begin to take the appropriate measures and provide the necessary resources. That should be a cause of great concern that we might meet again in this Chamber in a few months' time to discuss a response to a security and humanitarian crisis of a much greater and tragic scale.

How can we initiate multilateral action to effectively support regional efforts? The G-5 Sahel has seen many disparate interventions in the areas of migration, security, humanitarian assistance and development. Given the magnitude of crises, let us go beyond calls and other warnings. Let us ensure that the funding of multilateral institutions is commensurate with our security and development needs. Let us skilfully use our resources to avoid a vicious circle the harmful consequences of which will represent an even greater future challenge.

You have called for a return to the fundamental principles of the United Nations, Mr. President. Accordingly, courageous decisions must be made to support some Member States. As the Chairman of the G-5 Sahel stressed a few days ago at the Paris Peace Forum,

> "We are unable to rally international solidarity to achieve sustainable multilateral support for the Joint Force, which was established to fight terrorism and organized crime".

In keeping with Secretary-General António Guterres's call, I therefore add my voice to those of many Heads of State and representatives of our peoples to request that the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel be mandated under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Such a decision would consolidate the legitimacy of our efforts and give meaning to the shared responsibility in the fight against the hydra-headed terrorist threat. My presence here attests to the importance of the Sahel in preserving the geopolitical balance of the world. Let us therefore formalize the international community's attention.

As you so rightly pointed out recently, Mr President, while the world finds itself confronted with multiple new and extreme crises, causing regions that have long been stable to totter, on the African continent, including in the great Sahel region, a nexus of five devoted countries has courageously united in the face of adversity to prevent the ship from sinking. Those five countries are struggling to hold on despite everything and to work within their limited means to meet all those immense security and development challenges. Those countries require a greater level of tangible solidarity on the part of the international community in confronting challenges, the successful outcome or failure of which — no one in this Chamber should be in doubt — will have significant repercussions far beyond the borders of Africa. There is still time to take all the necessary measures and to finally act accordingly.

Lastly, I should like to highlight the recent work of the G-5 Sahel in the area of development — the only solution that can ensure long-term stability in the region. We are currently organizing the first G-5 Sahel donor and partner coordination conference to be held on Thursday, 6 December, in Nouakchott. A portfolio of 40 structure-related projects constitutes the first phase of the priority investment plan planned for the period 2019-2021. We welcome the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the implementation of which we discussed with key stakeholders of the United Nations system at a retreat held in Dakar last week. Our discussions with the Sahel Alliance are under way, and we signed a memorandum of understanding on 30 October in Niamey to implement an emergency development programme, in particular concerning water issues. All of that, however, is inadequate for

meeting the €1.9 billion needed for development, especially given that the sum of €414 million euros for security enhancement has failed to materialize.

I therefore solemnly call for increased investment in the Sahel. All forms of financing to promote prosperity are an investment in preventing insecurity. For that reason, less than a month before the crucial conference that is take place, I left Nouakchott to be speak before the Security Council. Let us act quickly and effectively in the conviction that doing so is in our common interest.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Sidikou, for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Buyoya.

Mr. Buyoya (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly congratulating China on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and I particularly welcome the Council's topical choice of agenda items, which demonstrate its indisputable interest in Africa.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his detailed and comprehensive report (S/2018/1006), which paints a clear picture of the efforts that have been undertaken in the operationalization of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and proposes possible solutions to the challenges that have been identified.

I should also like to pay tribute to the G-5 Sahel and its member States for their sacrifices and steadfast commitment to achieving the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in all its components. That reflects the political will of member States as they strive to surmount the multifaceted crises plaguing the region. I especially commend the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Maman Sidikou, who has skilfully and decisively put his heart and soul into ensuring that the G-5 Sahel becomes an institution that matters, and I reiterate my deepest gratitude to the bilateral partners and subregional, regional and international organizations that are working together for the operationalization of the Joint Force by providing training in various areas, strengthening capacity-building, restructuring the Permanent Secretariat and delivering logistical support. We are convinced that such support is vital if the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is to achieve the goals that have been assigned to it.

I also laud the opening of the Sahel Defence College and the Sahel Security College, which are institutions that will enable member States to harness high-quality human capacities over the short, medium and long terms. I take this opportunity to reiterate my deepest sympathies to the victims of the heinous attack targeting the Sévaré headquarters of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force that took place on 29 June, as well as to their families.

The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate. There are increasing asymmetrical attacks against defence and security forces and civilians in the area of operations of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It is imperative that the Force be operationalized as soon as possible and integrated into a comprehensive approach that encompasses security, development, improved governance — specifically vis-à-vis the presence of State institutions throughout the territory — and respect for human rights.

I now turn to the African Union's contribution. The Commission is pursuing its efforts to support the G-5 Sahel on the political, technical and material levels, to the extent that it is able to do so. The African Union Peace and Security Council, at its 679th meeting, on 13 April 2017, adopted a concept of operations for the Force and authorized its deployment for an initial, renewable period of 12 months. The Peace and Security Council reiterated its support for the Joint Force at its of 759th meeting, on 23 March this year. The African Union supports the idea embodied in the report that the concept of operations should continue to be tailored to reflect the realities on the ground.

I also welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis in his report on the overriding need to establish a support group for the G-5 Sahel Force. The African Union remains convinced of the importance of strengthening ties between the African Union and the G-5 Sahel Force and making them an integral component of the African peace and security architecture. In the light of the growing deterioration of security conditions, the African Union reiterates its support for the call issued by the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel, at their meeting held on the margins of the African Union Summit in Nouakchott, to endow the Force with a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and to enable it to enjoy direct United Nations financing. We find ourselves at a critical juncture and the Force deserves the support of the international community.

To conclude, I commend the members of the G-5 Sahel for the sacrifices that they have made in their struggle against terrorism. I thank all partners for their support, call for greater commitment, and reiterate the full support of the African Union at all levels — political, technical and material.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Buyoya for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Serrano.

Mr. Serrano (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Council on the European Union's action in support of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

The stability of the Sahel region is key not only for the countries that comprise it but also for the neighbouring regions and certainly for Europe's security. The European Union therefore remains committed, alongside other international partners, in particular the United Nations and the African Union, as well as bilateral partners, whose contribution is essential.

However, if certain actors deserve special mention today, it is the Sahel countries themselves, and in particular those of the G-5. Those countries, based on a common understanding not only of threats and challenges, but also opportunities, have taken their destiny into their own hands through a regional cooperation initiative. Since the creation of the G-5 Sahel in 2014, the European Union (EU) has actively supported its growth, including by helping to mobilize the international community, as it did, for example, at the international high-level conference on the Sahel, held in Brussels in February. This is in fact a priority of the foreign policy of the European Union and its member States.

I should like to cite some examples of the concrete support that the European Union is providing to our partners in the Sahel in the framework of an integrated approach in the political, development and security areas.

In regard to our political and diplomatic engagement, the partnership between the European Union and the G-5 Sahel is an almost daily reality, with frequent visits among European and Sahelian leaders, including at the summit in Brussels that I mentioned and regular ministerial meetings, the latest of which was held in June. The partnership is also reflected on the EU side in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the key role played by the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Mr. Angel Losada.

In that context, support for the Malian peace process through the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is crucial to the stability of Mali and the entire region. The European Union, which remains the largest donor in Mali, is actively involved in the international mediation in support of the process. Moreover, through the provision of targeted expertise, the European Union supports the efforts of the Malian authorities to consolidate their governance in central Mali.

With regard to development and humanitarian action, the aid given by the European Union and its member States to the region amounts to €8 billion for the period 2014-2020, including €3.9 billion from the European Development Fund and the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and €1.7 billion in budget support. That support is consistent with the G-5 Sahel priority investment plan. We look forward to the next donors' conference to be held in Nouakchott on 6 December. Moreover, in 2017, the European Union allocated €240 million in humanitarian assistance to the Sahel.

Lastly, allow me to talk about European cooperation in terms of security and defence in the Sahel. The security situation in the region is deteriorating, particularly in central Mali and in northern and eastern Burkina Faso. That was described by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Lacroix, and I refer to his briefing. In that context, the initiative of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is therefore being developed and increased international support in the areas of security and defence is becoming essential. The European Union has been present in the region since 2012 with three missions and nearly 800 European experts on the ground.

The European Union capacity-building mission (EUCAP) Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali are civilian missions aimed at supporting the internal security forces in Mali and in Niger to strengthen their capacities to fight against terrorism and organized crime. They also work to contribute to security sector reform through advice, training and the provision of equipment. Since their roll-out in 2012 and 2014, respectively, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel

Mali have provided training to nearly 16,000 members of the security forces in Niger and Mali.

In coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other partners, those two civilian missions closely support the Sahelian authorities in developing the police component of the Joint Force, a key element in ensuring the judicial follow-up of military actions and in strengthening the link between the Force and the local populations.

The European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), with 570 soldiers, is a military training mission that provides advice to the Malian authorities on restructuring the armed forces by training battalions. Eight battalions were trained between 2013 and 2017. EUTM Mali is also a key partner of the Joint Force. To date, it has organized four training courses for military staff officers of the five Sahel countries and a leadership seminar for the Force headquarters and the three sectors. In addition, EUTM provides advice to the Commander of the Joint Force and his command post on developing organizational and operational procedures and on infrastructure and equipment requests.

Together with our Sahelian partners, the European Union has now embarked on a process of adapting those missions to provide advice, training — through assistance to the G-5 Defence College and the Sahel Security College, among others — and support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as bilaterally to each of its members in terms of their cross-border cooperation.

To that end, first, with the agreement of the G-5 Sahel members, the area of operations of the missions will be extended to all the G-5 Sahel countries and the mandates of the missions adapted to the needs jointly identified. In addition, a regional coordination unit for those missions will be deployed to Nouakchott to better support the governance structures of the G-5 Sahel, as we have agreed with its Permanent Secretary, whom I warmly welcome.

Secondly, the EU strongly supports the development and the operational implementation of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with a total amount of €100 million. The support is structured as follows: equipment, services and infrastructure — €75 million; support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for operational and logistical support to the Joint Force in Mali — €10 million; support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a compliance framework on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law for the Joint Force operations — €10 million; and support for G-5 Sahel governance, in particular the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel trust fund — €5 million.

Although sometimes slower than desired, the delivery of EU-funded equipment, such as protection teams, armoured vehicles or anti-explosive devices, to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force units is under way. The equipment and services that have already been delivered to the field or are available to the Joint Force amount to the sum of €17.9 million. Procurement processes to the tune of €70 million are under way. Discussions continue with the Commander of the Force for the use of the €11.5 million still available

In that context, I also warmly welcome President Kaboré's announcement during his visit to Brussels last week that the G-5 Sahel would be ready to bear the recurrent costs of the Force, namely, €115 million a year.

Thirdly, the European Union has established the coordination hub, which is made available to the G-5 Sahel and international donors to facilitate the identification of needs and to coordinate the financial support of donors to the Joint Force. Moreover, I would like to thank the Security Council for the support expressed through resolution 2391 (2017) to the coordination hub, a platform that makes it possible to share and update the list of needs and lists of offers. In the context of regionalization, we aim to work even more closely with the G-5 Sahel trust fund and support committee.

I would also like to reaffirm that the cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union in Mali is excellent, particularly between our civilian and military missions and MINUSMA on the ground. The EU fully supports the work of MINUSMA and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and condemns all attacks against the Mission.

The European Union is determined to continue to build on its partnership with the G-5 Sahel countries, which is vital to the security and development of the region. We welcome the support of the Security Council for such efforts.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Serrano for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank President Buyoya, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Deputy-Secretary-General Pedro Serrano for their very enlightening briefings. I particularly welcome the presence around this table of Permanent Secretary Maman Sidikou, whose constant engagement we appreciate.

The fragility of the security situation in the Sahel and the recent extension of the terrorist threat to eastern Burkina Faso must alarm us all. The G-5 Sahel States have shouldered their responsibilities by establishing the Joint Force and by developing of common priority investment programme, which demonstrate their commitment to security and development on the ground. In that context, it is the responsibility of the international community to support the States concerned in their efforts to respond to a threat to international peace and security that concerns us all.

The establishment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, at the initiative of the States concerned, represents a historic initiative without any true precedent or equivalent. Given the magnitude of the task and the related challenges, we must duly assess and take stock of the significant progress made in barely more than a year.

Of course, since it is precisely a key tool in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel, everyone would have liked the process to have moved forward more quickly and for the G-5 Joint Force already to be fully operational. We all are aware of the considerable progress that remains to be made.

However, the achievements demonstrate that the process is well under way. It must be pursued with unity and determination.

I am thinking first of the fact that the Joint Force is now an operational reality, with 4,000 men deployed, functional command structures and several operations across the sectors. I am also thinking of the establishment of a human rights compliance framework unparalleled on the continent and the progress made in setting up a police component, which makes it a noble model of an African operation. The steps taken by the Malian Government following the abuses committed in Boulékéssi last May are part of that positive dynamic. Lastly, I think of the fact that the Joint Force is intended as an essential link in the security architecture deployed in the Sahel alongside the national armies, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Operation Barkhane and the European missions. The enemies of peace understood that when targeting its headquarters in Sévaré during the tragic attack last June.

For all those reasons, it is absolutely crucial that the G-5 Sahel States continue their mobilization in order to ensure that the Joint Force becomes fully operational as soon as possible. That is the priority. And the biggest priority of all is that new operations be conducted in the next few weeks. The decision of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel to relocate the headquarters of the Joint Force to Bamako must also be implemented as soon as possible.

Given this unprecedented mobilization by the G-5 Sahel States, it is now the responsibility of the international community and the Council to provide them with effective support that corresponds to the level of their challenges. That includes, first and foremost, ensuring that the pledged financial contributions materialize without delay. Many have already disbursed their pledged funds or are drawing up contracts to do so, thanks to the central role played by the European Union in that regard. It is essential that countries that have not yet made their contributions do so as soon as possible. It is also critical that additional resources be provided to finance the technical support that will enable the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to provide logistical and operational support on the ground, which is not the job of bilateral contributions.

The difficulties of generating and extracting international support, however, demonstrate that the mechanisms in place are not fully effective or capable of generating predictable, sustainable resources, which is crucial to scaling up the Joint Force in the short and medium term. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's recommendations for enhancing multilateral support for the Joint Force by providing a robust mandate and implementing a logistics package. We are ready to bring them to the Security Council as soon as the Joint Force is fully operational and we see the first results on the ground on the basis of the support that has already been provided. We will do it in the spirit of the quest for consensus that has always

driven our efforts on this issue, but also because it is crucial that we provide the Joint Force with all of the support it needs.

France firmly believes that this exceptional security commitment to stabilizing the Sahel should be accompanied by an equivalent level of mobilization on the political and development fronts. First, on the political front the priority is the eagerly awaited full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Council has put in place a robust framework in support of the Malian stakeholders. The international community must make use all of these mechanisms from now until the March deadline established in resolution 2423 (2018). We are also counting on the G-5 Sahel States to participate in the work of persuading all the Malian parties to come on board.

On the development front, the priority is creating sustainable prospects for the people of the Sahel, especially its young people. With 500 projects identified and totalling more than €7.5 billion by 2020, the Alliance for the Sahel is aiming to mobilize donors and promote good practices to ensure that the assistance reaches the most vulnerable populations quickly, particularly in cross-border areas. The United Nations Development Programme in particular has a key role to play in terms of governance. The signing of a partnership agreement between the Alliance and the G-5 Sahel is also an important step that should make it possible to implement rapid-impact projects by the end of the year in vulnerable areas identified by the G-5 Sahel, in order to prevent them from plunging into instability. We also fully support the G-5 Sahel priority investment plan and call on donors to be ready for the donor coordination conference to be held in Nouakchott on 6 December. All of those projects should be based on the broader framework established by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which is intended to serve as a guidepost for avoiding any diffusion or duplication of effort. Lastly, we encourage the Peacebuilding Commission to maintain its strong commitment to the Sahel issue. It represents an important setting conducive to encouraging balance and coordination between the political, security and development efforts.

The situation in the Sahel today demands our full attention and effort. All the parties must do their part — the G-5 Sahel, by conducting the Joint Force's new operations in the next few weeks; donors, by ensuring that they make their financial contributions without delay; and the Council, by committing to revisiting its multilateral support for the Joint Force once it is fully operational. France will issue a press statement to that effect at the end of this meeting.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his informative briefing. The African vision for resolving the issues in the region, as outlined by Mr. Maman Sidikou, the Permanent Secretary of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and Mr. Pierre Buyoya, High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, deserves the most serious attention we can give it. We are also grateful to the rest of today's briefers.

We agree with the alarming opinions on the situation in the Sahel that have been expressed today. The level of the threats to security and stability in that part of Africa is unprecedentedly high. The terrorist underground that has established itself in the region is scaling up its operations and seeking to expand its geographical territory. The number of new radical groups is growing, as is organized crime, which is actively exploiting the absence of any authority across vast areas of the region. The roots of these problems are well known. In the Sahel we are reaping the whirlwind sown by the collapse of statehood in Libya, the legacy of a crude foreign intervention. Practically speaking, we believe it will be impossible to stabilize the situation in the region without normalizing the situation in that country.

We welcome the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to create a Joint Force to combat terrorism and organized crime. In the 18 months of the Joint Force's existence, undeniable progress has been made. Several military operations have been carried out, the staffing of military personnel is at 80 per cent, the establishment of a headquarters and secretariat is nearing completion and mechanisms have been created for financing them. We expect that concrete plans for the continuation of joint operations will be announced in the near future. In our opinion the Joint Force has already demonstrated that it represents a key factor in ensuring the stability of the region. Of course, much remains to be done. The 29 June terrorist attack on the headquarters of the Joint Force in Sévaré was naturally a heavy blow that has slowed the training process. At the same time, it served to reveal the Joint Force's weak spots. As we understand it, the relevant conclusions

have been drawn and work has begun to address the errors. It will also be important to speed up the process of building military camps for the Joint Force, solve the problems of providing them with enough weapons and improve the training of combat personnel.

Those issues cannot be resolved without ensuring stable and predictable funding for the Sahel States' joint military structures. We have seen that the funds are slowly reaching the region. Unfortunately, many of those who made financial pledges in this regard have not been in a hurry to fulfil them. And owing to a lack of funding, neither can the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali fully implement its mandate to support the Joint Force.

We are convinced of the importance of further coordinated efforts, on the part of both the Africans and the international community, aimed at combating extremism in the Sahel-Sahara region. Military methods alone clearly cannot root out that evil. It is also essential to effectively counter the spread of extremist ideology, work constructively to tackle the acute socioeconomic problems plaguing the countries of the region and strengthen their State institutions, and we want to highlight the key role of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel in addressing those challenges.

Russia is studying the possibility of adjusting its effective cooperation with the G-5 Sahel States in order to deal with the region's pressing problems. We are already giving military and technical assistance to a number of the countries in the region and providing training for military and police personnel. We will continue to facilitate capacity-building for the armed forces of the G-5 Sahel with the aim of enabling their Joint Force to become an effective tool for the restoration and maintenance of peace in West Africa.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We commend the presidency of China for this opportunity to discuss the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their comprehensive briefings.

Kazakhstan remains concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel's tri-border area and the further expansion of terrorist and extremist groups into central Mali and eastern Burkina Faso. It is worrying that this insecurity is further aggravated by the alliances that terrorist and extremist groups have formed with groups involved in transnational organized crime, drug and human trafficking and arms proliferation. Our delegation welcomes the commitments and determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to operationalize the Joint Force, which is critical to effective counter-terrorism in the region. We believe that making the G-5 Sahel Joint Force fully operational will positively reinforce the joint efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Malian national security forces and other mechanisms to bring peace and stability to the Sahel.

However, to succeed, the G-5 Sahel countries need predictable and long-term sustainable funding from the donor community, as well as technical assistance from Member States. We therefore support the recommendations contained in the semi-annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1006) regarding the need to revise support measures and the funding mechanism. In turn, the G5-Sahel States will have to speed up the process of making the Joint Force fully functional, improve its operational readiness and sustainably implement the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. We welcome the opening of the security and defence colleges established by the G-5 Sahel, which is an important step towards enhancing the Joint Force's capacity.

Another important task is ensuring the complementarity and strengthening the coordination between the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with all security forces in the region, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and regional frameworks, in particular the African Union-led Nouakchott process. The Joint Force should find its place within the larger political and institutional framework and strategy that is planned for the subregion, and which also calls for improving coherence among the Sahel countries themselves. We therefore support the call from the G-5 Sahel summit held in Nouakchott in July for harmonizing the G-5

Sahel priority investment plan and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

To genuinely address instability in the region, counter-terrorism measures must be accompanied by development efforts and by tackling the root causes of conflict and instability. To some extent, those issues can be resolved or at least reduced by strengthening local governance, reducing poverty and tribal rivalries, providing basic services and creating more jobs. Mitigating the effects of climate change should be another priority. My country has proposed a three-pronged strategy for resolving regional conflicts, consisting in strengthening the security-development nexus, adopting a regional approach and streamlining the United Nations system to enable it to deliver as one.

A comprehensive overall strategy of this kind could prove to be a highly effective and sustainable tool for addressing the common threats facing the Sahel and the countries of the region. The recalibrated United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the recently launched Support Plan represent a good basis for such a comprehensive and integrated approach. We are also looking forward to the alignment of the Integrated Strategy with the African Union's strategy for the Sahel. We hope that concrete results will be achieved in that regard at the upcoming African Union ministerial meeting on Mali and the Sahel. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to helping the Sahel countries to fulfil their vision for peace, progress and prosperity.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me also thank today's briefers.

The challenges facing the Sahel region are complex and becoming increasingly so. The United Kingdom is concerned about the increasing incidence of terrorism, criminality and intercommunity violence in central Mali. We share the Secretary-General's concerns about the spread of insecurity and terrorism to other parts of the region, including eastern Burkina Faso. Many speakers today have talked about the importance not only of security — although that is key — but also about development, and the wider economic development and provision of services that are required. We can see our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in action in this region. There is not one single element that can ensure success alone. All of them are needed. There are economic and social issues that go back decades and that underpin the instability in the Sahel. Our development work must address those long-standing causes of the instability we see while also emphasizing individual rights.

The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) needs to tackle terrorism and create the space for Governments and international organizations to safely deliver services. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), of course, is a crucial component of assisting Governments in that space. In Mali in particular, we need to focus on the peace process and recommit to it. All those components are therefore not only individually but collectively vital, and it is the core task of all in leadership roles, whether in New York, Nouakchott or on the ground, to ensure that those efforts are connected, sequenced and effective. And it would help the Council if we could hear more about those joint activities in practice as well as in theory.

As the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006) sets out, there is clear progress to applaud. We recognize the leaders and the personnel of the G-5 Sahel States for continuing their efforts to unite and work together despite difficult and adverse circumstances. The United Kingdom is particularly encouraged by the successful deployments of troops and the conduct of six Joint Force operations on the boundary zones; the full operationalization of the three sector headquarters and the launch of the Sahel security and defence colleges. We recognize the bravery and dedication of the G-5 Joint Force in what Mr. Lacroix described as an alarming security situation.

We were also pleased to see the update on the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. The United Kingdom emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the operations of the Joint Force are conducted in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We welcome the steps already taken to advance the compliance framework and encourage continued efforts to embed and make it operational throughout the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The protection of civilians and the operationalization of the framework are vital to maintaining the support and consent of the populations that the Joint Force was created to protect.

Moving forward, we want to encourage the G-5 Sahel secretariat to finalize the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations, which will both demonstrate

unity of purpose within the Joint Force and boost donor confidence. We call on the G-5 Sahel countries to expedite their efforts to deploy all their outstanding troops and fully establish the police component in order to address the growing transborder threat that the region is facing. I welcomed Mr.Sidikou's bluntness this morning. We also strongly urge all partners to make good on the financial commitments they have made to the Joint Force as soon as possible in order to ensure that it becomes even more of a reality as quickly as it can. The United Kingdom reiterates its support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. To that end we have contributed 15.5 per cent of the package of support of the European Union (EU) to the Joint Force as well as pledging £2 million in bilateral support, and we have deployed three Chinook helicopters to the Sahel to support Operation Barkhane. That is on top of the approximately $200 million that we have provided to the Sahel in development and humanitarian assistance between 2018 and 2019.

The United Kingdom recognizes the contribution of the regional actors working for stability in the Sahel, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the EU missions, and we support the technical assistance and training they are providing. Enhance coordination is key to ensuring that the various stabilization efforts have maximum impact and avoid duplication. We commend the EU's role in managing the coordination hub so far, and recognize its intention to transfer the hub to the G-5 Sahel once it has the capacity to receive and host it. To that end, we strongly urge the G-5 Sahel to accelerate the establishment of the support group that will serve as a platform for exchanges and coordination with national, regional and international partners.

I made it clear earlier that military action alone is not the solution to this issue, and I outlined some of what the United Kingdom has done to that end. With that in mind, we welcome the recalibration of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the launch of the United Nations Support Plan, which provides an important framework for addressing the structural impediments to development, peace and security in the region in a more integrated manner, and the issues in the Sahel more generally, which, as I said before, go back decades. We also welcome the continuing role taken by the Peacebuilding Commission in mobilizing commitments and partnerships between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing implementation of the Integrated Strategy.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes this briefing on the progress of the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). I thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their excellent presentations.

The briefings informed us about the progress that has been made and the challenges to be tackled in order to ensure the full operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The challenges are related in particular to a lack of adequate, predictable resources, sufficient personnel, and appropriate training and equipment adequate to the scale of the security threats. Despite those difficulties, the Council's unity of action and the continued commitment of State and institutional actors have enabled the concerted and generally satisfactory implementation of the recommendations of resolution 2391 (2017), on the logistical and operational support to the Joint Force provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire would like to encourage all the relevant stakeholders, particularly the G-5 Sahel States, to continue their efforts to bring the Joint Force up to speed.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006), while the progress in building up the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is encouraging, it is still below expectations. Côte d'Ivoire therefore urges the G-5 Sahel States to continue their dialogue with international partners with a view to strengthening and improving the coordination of the multifaceted support for the Joint Force's operationalization. We continue to believe that its rapid deployment capabilities and familiarity with the social and cultural environment constitute the Joint Force's comparative advantages in the fight against the spread of terrorism and cross-border crime in the Sahel.

The complexity of the current security challenges in the Sahel and the West African subregion demand that States pool their resources to fight terrorist groups.

My country therefore welcomes MINUSMA's logistical and operational support to the Joint Force, as mandated by resolution 2391 (2017), which is a good example of cooperation between United Nations and African peace operations.

We emphasize how pleased we were with the signing on 23 February of the technical agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel countries. We therefore urge all partners to follow up on their financing pledges in order to complete the process of operationalizing the Joint Force. We welcome the adoption by the G-5 Sahel States of the compliance framework aimed at ensuring scrupulous respect for human rights by the Joint Force. Its implementation will require raising awareness of respect for fundamental human rights among the military components of the Joint Force, as well as effective punishment for those who commit violations of human rights.

Even if the Joint Force reaches its full operational capacity, it is undeniable that its effectiveness will continue to depend on current efforts to stabilize the political environment in the region. The Joint Force must therefore be one piece of a political effort that goes beyond security policy to form part of a comprehensive process for the lasting settlement of the current crises in the Sahel region. In that regard, and in the context of the quest for a political solution to the Malian crisis, my delegation calls on all the signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to implement it immediately. The fact is that ensuring the Agreement's success would be a first step towards restoring lasting peace and stability in the Sahel. In addition, the Joint Force's security responses must also be supported by strategies aimed at eradicating the factors behind regional vulnerabilities and improving the resilience of States and local populations to crises. We believe that to that end we must ensure that the ongoing security and development policies are aligned so as to provide sustainable responses to the multidimensional crises facing the Sahel. In that regard, we appreciate the recalibration of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the development of the United Nations Support Plan in the wake of the review of the security and development challenges in the region.

Côte d'Ivoire appreciates the financial support of bilateral and multilateral partners to the Joint Force, but we remain concerned about its long-term financial viability, given the scale of its needs and the delays in making the promised funds available. We believe that considering the regional dimension and scale of the current threats, it is the international community's responsibility to come up with rapid responses to the need for predictable and sustainable funding.

The consequences of insecurity and instability, exacerbated by the actions of numerous jihadist groups and cross-border criminal networks, extend well beyond the Sahel region. Today they constitute an important challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security, demanding that we act urgently to formulate coordinated and sustainable responses in order to bring stability and development to the people of the Sahel.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my country's full appreciation to the States members of the G-5 Sahel for the enormous sacrifices that they have undertaken despite difficult regional circumstances. Their steadfast commitment in a context where Africa aspires to take ownership of its collective security is an example that we should support. Côte d'Ivoire will continue to stand by their side as part of the collective efforts undertaken by the international community.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Permanent Secretary Maman Sidikou of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel Pierre Buyoya, and the Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis response at the European External Action Service, Pedro Serrano, for their respective briefings and updates concerning the situation in the Sahel region and the activities of the G-5 Sahel.

We fully recognize that the restoration and expansion of State authority in northern Mali and G-5 Sahel countries still remains a serious challenge. In the absence of viable State structures, the promotion of peace and reconciliation across the region and carrying out critical institutional reforms, including security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Mali, have been very difficult.

The threats and frequent attacks in recent months against security forces and other personnel serving in State institutions, as well as the destruction of public facilities, must be taken very seriously. We agree with the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006) that the numerous recent terrorist attacks are clear indications of the growing presence of terrorist groups in the region, including those along the Libyan-Chadian border, which are taking advantage of the security vacuum not covered

by the operations of the international forces or the G-5 Sahel member States armed forces. This situation calls for stronger coordination and deterrence work by the G5-Sahel Joint Force and the national militaries and security agents of each State of the region.

The joint efforts of the G-5 Sahel member States and their commitment, which was renewed during the high-level week of the General Assembly through the pledge of Member States to fully operationalize the Joint Force, deserve appreciation. If countries of the region are assured of predictable financing and supplied with adequate equipment capabilities, we believe that there is no reason why this should not materialize.

At the aforementioned high-level event on Mali and the Sahel, representatives of donor countries expressed their willingness to support the Joint Force and urged the G-5 Sahel member States to accelerate force generation efforts. It is, however, important that the international community, including the Council, take concrete action, as requested by President Ibrahim Keita of Mali and other representatives from the region, to place the G-5 Sahel Joint Force under a Chapter VII mandate so as to ensure continuous support and funding. The geographic challenge of military operations in the Sahel desert and the vastness of the terrain make it imperative that the capacity of the Joint Force be strengthened through robust international support.

We support the African Union's work in reporting on the activities of the Joint Force, focusing on progress in its operationalization, international support to the Joint Force, the implementation of the technical agreement, challenges encountered, and adherence by the G-5 Sahel to human rights and international humanitarian law. In this context, we very much support efforts of the G-5 Sahel in restructuring its secretariat to meet its operational demands.

While the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and presence of other international forces are contributing to resolving the security problem in the Sahel, partnerships in the social and economic development aspects, and principally in the implementation of the priority investment plan, should be a major preoccupation in order to ensure sustainable development in the region. In that regard, the cooperation of the United Nations agencies — such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali — is indeed vital. We hope that the outcome of the annual discussion of the Peacebuilding Commission on 12 November will help mobilize support for the G-5 Sahel and the wider region.

Although the Governments of the region do not stint in exerting efforts, the humanitarian situation in the Sahel remains very precarious and may continue to be worsened by increasing conflict and climate-related challenges. We wish to extend our support to the emergency programme for the rehabilitation of local infrastructure in border areas of the countries of the Sahel region. In that connection, it is important that access to basic services and job opportunities in the border areas be scaled up in the context of implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I too thank all our briefers this morning

I want to start by commending the countries of the region for their very valuable efforts for peace and security in the Sahel. We understand how those efforts are carried out under very difficult circumstances, and I take the opportunity to express our condolences for the loss of lives among security forces and civilians. We share the grave concern about the deteriorating security situation in the region. We are especially worried about the situation in central Mali and the spill-over of violence to Burkina Faso and the Niger. The high number of civilian casualties and allegations of violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law are alarming. I think our briefers rightly underlined the effect that all this has on the people, not least the youth, of the region.

We therefore welcome the determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to make a united effort to meet the security challenges. We are encouraged by the steps taken so far in the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as the extensive support provided by partners, including not least the European Union. We know from our experience in the Security Council how regional efforts and cooperation provide such a huge and important boost to any United Nations efforts for peace.

It is now crucial to swiftly implement the remaining elements of resolution 2391 (2017). Creating the conditions for outstanding troops to be deployed and the

police component of the Joint Force to be established without delay should be a priority. To ensure the full functioning and credibility of the Force, authority over battalions must be transferred to the Force Commander. A new timeline for reaching full operational capacity should be defined soon, as others have said this morning. The further development and clarification of the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations are equally important. Clarity on the desired end state would demonstrate unity of purpose and bolster donor confidence.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006), respect for human rights and international humanitarian law will be a key determining factor for the success of the Joint Force. It is imperative that alleged human rights violations, including those related to the operations of the Joint Force, be prevented and investigated. Perpetrators must be held to account.

We appreciate initiatives aimed at increasing confidence between populations and the G-5 Sahel countries' security forces. We are encouraged by the continued work on the establishment of a robust human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. The operational and logistical support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to the Joint Force is important. At the same time, we continue to emphasize that this support should not affect MINUSMA's capacity to implement its own mandate and strategic priorities in Mali.

As we move forward, options for further United Nations support must be seriously considered. Predictable and reliable funding is vital if the Joint Force is to be able to carry out planning and operations in an effective and sustainable manner. To achieve that, it is imperative in turn that the Force live up to existing standards and expectations.

The full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains key. Achieving long-term stability and sustaining peace in the region also require taking a holistic and inclusive approach. The Joint Force needs to be embedded within a larger political and institutional framework, as also emphasized by the Secretary-General. We welcome the establishment of the support group for the Joint Force, but note that further efforts to enhance strategic direction are needed. That must be carried out in close coordination with regional structures and organizations.

Durable peace and stability requires a combination of security and development measures. In that regard, we appreciate the joint efforts by regional actors, the African Union and the European Union with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. That Plan now provides a unique opportunity for more coherent and coordinated international support. The upcoming donor coordination conference in December, which will discuss the priority investment plan, will be important. We note Secretary Sidikou's very good point that pledges must be translated into real support.

Earlier this week the annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) also focused on the Sahel and the joint PBC-Economic and Social Council meeting on climate change. There was strong support for the priorities identified in the United Nations Integrated Strategy, including focusing on economic growth, governance and climate change. The importance of youth and increasing women's participation was also highlighted. It is important that the PBC continue to engage in order to mobilize support, sustain international attention and coordinate efforts. The Peacebuilding Commission remains a unique platform for convening actors, bringing about a holistic understanding of security and development and politically accompanying countries and regions in transition.

The Deputy Secretary-General and Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs visited countries in the Sahel region last July. We then organized a high-level Council meeting on women and peace and security (see S/PV.8306). The conclusions from that visit and the meeting, as reflected in the presidential statement on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/16), emphasize the importance of enhancing the role of women in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace.

Sweden remains committed to supporting Mali and the Sahel in their efforts to enhance security and development and build sustainable peace. In addition to our substantial troop contribution to MINUSMA, our broad commitment includes support through the EU as well as bilateral and regional development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Strong international support, a united Security Council and effective regional cooperation through the G-5 Sahel will be key for the Sahel region's forward progress towards peace and stability.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Buyoya, High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy, for their briefings today.

There is no denying the many challenges faced today by the people and countries of the Sahel. We are concerned by the increase in intercommunal violence and insecurity along the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and by the continued prevalence of terrorist and criminal activity throughout the region. As many have said here today, only through a combination of good governance focused on addressing the root causes of instability and creating opportunity, respect for human rights and security can the region resolve the challenges and defeat the threats that it faces.

The United States commends the initiative of the G-5 Sahel member States to create and operationalize its Joint Force to combat threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime. We take this opportunity to recognize the sacrifices of the soldiers of G-5 member States and their families and to also honour the civilians killed as a result of the violence and insecurity in the region.

The United States strongly supports the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and its efforts to establish lasting security. We believe that bilateral support remains the most effective option. We continue to work closely with all partners to coordinate our contributions of much-needed equipment, training and technical advice. Over the past year the United States has nearly doubled its assistance to G-5 Sahel member States, from $60 million to approximately $111 million, specifically to fill prioritized capability gaps of the Joint Force. That amount constitutes just one piece of broader and long-standing United States security assistance to the G-5 member States, with over $1 billion in total United States support to their institutions and combat capabilities since 2012.

We laud the continued support of the international community and the Joint Force's development and successful operationalization, in particular the support of the European Union (EU) for the implementation of the human rights compliance framework for the Joint Force and its continuing training missions. We commend the G-5's collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) towards the continued establishment of a compliance framework. The Joint Force's professionalism and respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law will be critical to its long-term success. We also salute France's long-standing and integral role as a security partner to the Sahel countries through its Operation Barkhane and the many sacrifices made by that mission's men and women to defeat continuing violent extremist threats. We also applaud the role of the United Nations, including the personnel of MINUSMA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and others, who are working diligently to solve political insecurity challenges across the region.

The United States hopes to see the effective implementation of the technical agreement among the G-5 Sahel, the United Nations and the EU called for in resolution 2391 (2017), which allows for MINUSMA to be reimbursed for logistical support provided to the Force within Mali's territory. As Ambassador Haley stated a year ago (see S/PV.8080), we believe that is the full extent of any support role that the United Nations should play outside of continued coordination and technical assistance on a voluntary basis. But the technical agreement remains a way for MINUSMA to help at a critical stage. We encourage donors to support the trust fund for MINUSMA reimbursement in order to facilitate urgent engineering needs like the Mission-proposed camp designs, which still await the G-5 Sahel's approval.

On a related but separate note, we also do not believe Chapter VII authorization is needed to accomplish the Joint Force's mission, as the G-5 Sahel countries already has existing agreements in place for military operations in their respective territories.

As others have recognized, security responses alone will not solve every problem. Therefore, the United States continues its multisector partnerships with the Governments and societies of the G-5 Sahel countries to bolster stability and security through United States humanitarian, health, agriculture, governance and development assistance. The United States provided more than $460 million during its 2017 fiscal year in development and humanitarian assistance to programmes in those countries. As we have stated

before, our support seeks to complement the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the creative partnership envisioned in its Support Plan.

At the centre of the region, with its own unique political and security challenges, is Mali and its peace agreement. We call again on the parties to that agreement and to those of the new Pact for Peace in Mali to make significant progress over the next few months in recognition of how critical their success on the road map will be. Going forward, we cannot and should not accept the lack of coordination and communication among the parties that we have seen in the past, including, for example, the disagreements that led to the failure of the opening ceremony for accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration last week in Gao. Parties must expeditiously resolve outstanding issues and rapidly implement the key provisions outlined in resolution 2423 (2018). The stakes are too high, both for the people of Mali and of the region. The Security Council should reserve the right to use all its available tools, including sanctions, on spoilers who obstruct the agreement's implementation.

The United States will continue to work together with the G-5 Sahel and its partners to ensure our bilateral support is appropriate and effective. We also encourage all donors to disburse the resources pledged to the Joint Force last February in Brussels. Through our effective coordination with the security and development actors in the region, the leadership of the African Union and that of the Economic Community of West African States in solving regional and local disputes, significant improvements in security can be made. The sustainability of those improvements will depend on the progress of the G-5 member States towards effective governance, the creation of access to opportunity and respect for human rights, accountability and inclusiveness. Also critical will be an expansion of the roles of women, young people and marginalized groups in decision-making. Together, those steps can contribute to achieving durable peace and stability and unleash the potential of this vital region and its people.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to express our thanks for the convening of this meeting and for the important briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Mr. Pierre Buyoya and Mr. Pedro Serrano.

Peru is following with concern the delicate humanitarian situation and the continuing deterioration of security in the Sahel subregion, despite the valuable action of the countries that make up the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We regret the spread of violent extremism and condemn the persistence of terrorist attacks. We wish to emphasize the need to redouble our efforts in three areas that we consider fundamental to stabilize the subregion and build sustainable peace.

First, with regard to security, the Joint Force is called on to play an essential role in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime, which are mutually reinforcing phenomena. To do that it must have appropriate equipment and enhance its operational capacity through the full deployment of its military and police components. That, in turn, presupposes the availability of predictable and sustainable financing, as well as the technical cooperation of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). To that end, we stress the need for the G-5 Sahel countries to continue to implement the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations and the human rights compliance framework, with a view to bolstering the confidence and support of the international community.

Secondly, in the political sphere, we believe that the peaceful holding of elections in Mali and Mauritania should make it possible to strengthen institutions and governance in those countries, which, in turn, should be reflected through more legitimate and effective action for the stability and progress of the subregion. In that connection, we hope that the recent signing of the Pact for Peace in Mali, in line with the provisions of resolution 2423 (2018), will enable the revitalization and accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

Thirdly, on the issue of sustainable development, as several speakers have pointed out this morning, achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel goes beyond military considerations. We need a multidimensional approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict. That means, among other measures, building and strengthening the necessary capacities and institutions to promote and protect human rights, countering the negative effects of climate change, providing basic services and fostering sustained economic growth in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We stress the importance of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and of increasing employment opportunities, particularly

for young people. Women and young people are called upon to play a central role in building a better future for their societies.

Finally, the various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed in the field to maintain political and operational coherence must reflect and address the needs and priorities of the member countries of the G-5 Sahel, as well as the provisions of the relevant Council resolutions. The G-5 Sahel is a clear example of the potential and commitment of African countries to promote peace and security on their continent. They deserve the strong support of the international community and, in particular, of the Council. In that connection, we stress that the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, together with its Support Plan, provide a comprehensive framework for working to strengthen governance, security and development in the region. Consequently, all initiatives should operate within that framework.

Peru will continue to support the efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries, MINUSMA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, among other agencies of the United Nations system, as well as actors committed to achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, allow me to thank the briefers for their excellent statements, which give a clear picture of the cooperation of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union with the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Given the current situation, such cooperation is critical.

Today I would like to address three points. First, I will highlight concerns about the changing security environment. Secondly, I will mention the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Thirdly, I will focus on the link between security and development in the Sahel.

First, with regard to the security situation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is concerned about reports of increased cooperation among terrorist networks in the Sahel. As a result, new regions are under threat, particularly the north and east of Burkina Faso — and even beyond the Sahel. In addition, the increase in intercommunal violence has complicated the situation. That is evident in central Mali, as the Council has been informed several times this year. The evolving threats calls for evolving responses. The emergence of violent local conflicts requires deeper knowledge of local dynamics, while the regional challenges require a regional approach and regional cooperation. Therefore, it is critical that the Council discuss today its support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

That brings me to my second point — the operationalization of the Joint Force. The results obtained in recent months by the members of the G-5 Sahel are admirable, especially since they had to overcome serious problems, such as the attack on their headquarters in Sévaré. We commend the leadership of the Nigerian presidency in that regard. The time has come to intensify efforts towards the standing up of the Joint Force. In particular, we advocate the operationalization of its police component and its cooperation with national anti-criminal networks. We welcome recent progress in the implementation of the human rights compliance framework. The prevention of human rights violations requires constant attention and commitment, and the members of the G-5 Sahel must fully take on that responsibility. Bilateral and regional partners are considering increasing their support for the Joint Force. We reaffirm that it is not only resources that are needed. Force-absorption capacity and the coordination of support and requests are also factors to be considered. It therefore remains critical to strengthen the capacity of national armed forces.

On my third point, the link between security and development, this week we held a discussion with Mr. Sidikou, the Ambassadors of the G-5 countries and interested Council members on preventing violent extremism in the Sahel. I am pleased to see the Ambassadors of the G-5 countries here today. It became very clear during that meeting that all partners in the Sahel are pursuing the same objective, namely, regional peace and stability. The security efforts of the Joint Force, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and other actors, including European Union missions, will be insufficient. We must invest more in conflict prevention. To prevent violent extremism, we must attack the root causes of the conflict, including climate change, which leads to water scarcity and desertification and, as a result, food insecurity and competition between farmers and herders.

Persistent inequalities and discrimination against particular regions or communities are also sources of

conflict. In addition, we must keep in mind the enabling factors and triggers identified by the United Nations Development Programme in its report entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, on the disproportionate use of State violence.

Therefore, the success of initiatives in the Sahel will depend on key elements, such as boosting the confidence of local populations and ensuring accountability, respect for human rights, close cooperation between the Joint Force and strong national judicial systems, and the complementarity of development and security efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the role of the G-5 Joint Force in making the Sahel a more stable and secure region. That is precisely the model of regional ownership that is needed for the maintenance of international security and peace. The G-5 donors conference for development initiatives scheduled for 16 December will be an important milestone. In particular, investment is needed in fragile border areas.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains a committed partner of the countries of the Sahel in the areas of security, diplomacy and development. As our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok, said during his recent visit to the Niger, we intend to increase our diplomatic presence and support for the region. As international partners, we must adopt a firm and modest attitude that respects the leadership and ownership of the G-5 Sahel countries.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I express my appreciation to your delegation, Sir, for the convening of this meeting, which allows us once again to emphasize the need to act against extremism and its impact in the Sahelo-Saharan region. We welcome and thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy-Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service.

We are at a crucial and critical juncture in our fight against terrorism, criminality and — I would add — mercenaries in the Sahel region. The increasing mobility and sophistication of terrorist armed groups operating in the region have become a real threat to international peace and security. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is following very closely and is concerned about the increase in extremism in the Sahel. Recent asymmetrical and cross-border attacks on local defence and security forces, on the one hand, and against the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, its personnel and facilities, on the other, underscore the need to act swiftly to halt increasing levels of terrorism. To that end, the response of the international community must consist in the constant promotion and implementation of joint initiatives, as High Representative Buyoya underscored, by prioritizing multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches. In that regard, a joint military partnership for transborder cooperation is the appropriate means for responding to the multiple threats to the region's security.

In parallel with those joint efforts, it is necessary to ensure joint funding and support to achieve the full operational capability of the Joint Force. We firmly believe that the needs of the Joint Force would be largely met if pledges made to support it were fulfilled. Funding is needed to train soldiers, achieve standardization among the five States' armies, acquire optimal security facilities and equipment, build and fortify operational bases and to meet any other need to counter terrorists and prevent attacks. We also commend the commitment of contributors and donors and urgently call for hastening the establishment of a trust fund in accordance with the provisions of the extraordinary summit of Heads of State of the G-5 countries held on the margins of the thirty-first Summit of the African Union, held on 2 July in Nouakchott.

As the Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel just announced, the five States have decided to finance the Joint Force beginning next year and provide it with an annual budget of $13 million, which we commend. However, we must be aware of the complex problems facing the Sahel countries and the possibility that that decision may affect other development priorities, such as in the health and education sectors, which largely justifies the need to combine synergies to achieve sustained financing.

The close collaboration of the G-5 Sahel with partners, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and INTERPOL, should be underlined. The joint assessment missions held from July to October by the Permanent Secretariat and UNODC will undoubtedly create a legal framework for the standing up of the police component so as to ensure

that the Joint Force can adequately fulfil its mission to combat terrorism and organized crime by ensuring transparent judicial follow-up. Moreover, we commend the strategic partnership with INTERPOL, which is critical to information-sharing and ensuring that relevant criminal information generated by Joint Force operations and investigations can be cross-checked and recorded in INTERPOL global databases.

As highlighted by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, we must not forget that political and security considerations are inextricably linked to humanitarian and development issues, if we are to succeed in consolidating and sustaining peace in the Sahel. Regional development initiatives — such as the signing, on 30 October in Niamey, of a partnership protocol between the Permanent Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel and the Alliance for the Sahel to establish a framework for cooperation and operational modalities for implementing joint projects in a rapid and flexible manner; the emergency plan for the Sahel of the Government of Burkina Faso, which foresees investments in infrastructure, energy and public services; the official launching of the disarmament, demobilization and socioeconomic reintegration process for former combatants in State structures in Mali; and electrification projects in Malian cities, such as in Ménaka — are all measures heading in the right direction.

Extremism in the Sahel is spreading. It is a fact. That spread, which threatens not only the West African region but also Central Africa, in which Equatorial Guinea is located, is the result of the current situation in Libya. We must not forget that. The main problem is not the emergence here and there of local armed groups that are remotely controlled by recent jihadist movements in North Africa, the Middle East, the Gulf countries, Afghanistan or elsewhere. The problem involves the extraordinary ease with which terrorist groups are able to penetrate new territories, while provoking conflicts among ethnocultural communities over access to resources. It should be noted that, as a result of that situation, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea was the victim in December 2017 of an attempt at its destabilization, which was orchestrated by mercenaries from countries of the subregion. That incident undoubtedly underscores the need for even the Central African States to join international efforts by providing specific and meaningful support to our brothers in the Sahel. At the bipartite summit held in Lomé on 30 July, the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Economic Community of West African States and of the Economic Community of Central African States expressed their desire for intercommunity solidarity. It should therefore be implemented without further delay, by means of logistical and financial support, or through the use of the intelligence services of the various States, in the fight against terrorism and mercenaries in all its forms and manifestations.

Furthermore, we hope that the forthcoming G-5 Sahel donors and partners coordination conference will make it possible to adopt concrete mechanisms for financing the priority investment programme in order to translate into action the efforts of the relevant Member States to guarantee the security of the people and assets needed for sustainable development.

In conclusion, I recall the what the Senegalese President said in Paris on the sidelines of the celebration of the centenary of the 1918 armistice:

> "The Sahel issue requires a concerted effort equal in strength and scope to that in Syria to combat terrorism in the Sahelo-Saharan region."

Lastly, Equatorial Guinea supports the French delegation's proposed statement to the press on the proceedings of this meeting.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their valuable briefings.

I would like to address two main issues as part of our discussion today: first, security, and secondly, development.

First, concerning security, the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel and the proliferation of terrorist attacks throughout the region, including the attack on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force headquarters in June, are very worrisome and constitute serious challenges. The increase in the number of attacks against military forces in Mali and neighbouring countries has contributed to the deterioration of the security situation and insecurity

among civilians, which must be addressed as soon as possible. We look forward to the Malian Government's investigations into the killing of a number of civilians in May.

We call on the Joint Force to use the United Nations expertise in order to build up its human rights capacity. I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, United Nations agencies, the European Union and the African Union for their efforts in that regard.

Pertaining to the Joint Force, we value the commitment made by the five countries to advance and promote the work of the Joint Force, especially at the organizational, logistical and operational levels, to enable it to fight terrorist groups in the Sahel. We look forward to the full operationalization of the Force. The financial, security and logistical challenges facing the five countries impede them from carrying out their responsibilities. It is only through sustainable funding, as requested by the Force at the high-level meeting held on the margins of the General Assembly in September and as stressed by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2018/1006), that the Force will be able to confront the serious challenges as it should that threaten the security and stability in the region.

We cannot discuss the challenges in the Sahel without addressing the political situation in Mali. As the Council heard last month (see S/PV.8376), strides have been made to that end. We have seen positive signs of a renewed commitment by all the relevant parties in the country to implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Malian Government has stepped up its efforts to extend its authority over areas under the control of terrorist groups, after those groups were able to expand their areas of operation to neighbouring countries. The Government has also sought to provide order and justice to citizens in those areas. The Joint Force has an important role in building trust with the communities that had been under the control of terrorist groups.

Secondly, regarding development, stability in the region requires sustainable development. Undoubtedly, the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel leads to that end. We welcome the decision by the Peacebuilding Commission during its annual session to focus on development in the Sahel. As stated by the Deputy Secretary-General during that session, the region has huge potential and natural resources. However, it suffers from a lack of financial and human resources. We believe that development has a pivotal role in the prevention of conflicts. Kuwait has therefore supported the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and we have cooperated closely with all countries of the Sahel to support various development projects. Kuwait has also provided nearly $150 million over the past three years through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

We welcome the continuing cooperation among the countries of the region, the United Nations, the African Union and all international stakeholders in the region to strengthen capacities in the areas of governance, building police capacities and the participation of women and youth. Those have a direct effect on development and stability, which would contribute to building trust between the Joint Force and the people and creating the necessary environment to support the Force in fighting terrorism. My country commends the G-5 Sahel in efforts to that end through the Priority Investment Programme.

In conclusion, I reiterate our support for the Joint Force, which will be unable to achieve its goals without the support of the United Nations and the international community to curb the spread of threats across the region. The Force can also play an important role in ensuring the development of the Sahel. We stand ready to cooperate with all members of the Security Council to address the future steps to be taken by the Joint Force. In that regard, we support the press statement proposed by the French delegation.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, let me thank today's briefers for their very informative and valuable statements on the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and recent developments in the region.

Poland welcomes the commitment and determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to overcome the many challenges they face in operationalizing the Joint Force. Reports that the Joint Force's operations will resume in December are encouraging and will send an important message to adversaries that they are not giving up.

The cross-border character of threats in the Sahel region requires transnational responses. We commend the even greater role of the regional organizations in improving effective cooperation among Sahel countries. We welcome the adoption of the regional strategy and

pursued work on subregional strategies. However, much remains to be done and the obstacles that need to be overcome are diverse and complex. Therefore, we urge the G-5 Sahel countries to accelerate efforts to deploy all remaining troops and fully establish the police component.

It is also urgent that the operationalization of the Force goes along with the adequate implementation of the comprehensive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies at the national level. Furthermore, members of the G-5 Sahel need to step up their efforts to finalize the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations.

We remain deeply concerned by the multifaceted challenges in the Sahel. The spread of insecurity and terrorism to other parts of the region, including into eastern Burkina Faso, is particularly worrying. Terrorism continues to have devastating effects on lives and livelihoods, depriving entire communities of access to basic social services, as well as long-term opportunities and perspectives.

Winning the hearts and minds of the populations is crucial in the struggle against terrorism. Addressing violent extremism and terrorism through security measures is essential, but must be supported by a broader political and institutional framework that can guide its operations, ensure alignment with regional strategies and help translate strategic decisions into operational and tactical measures.

In that context, the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel should promote the completeness and adequacy of regional and subregional initiatives. That opportunity must also be seized to create a platform for cooperation aimed at assuring wider respect for international law and standards, including human rights law and humanitarian law.

Weak governance and neglect by the State, unemployment, socioeconomic exclusion and inequality, worsened by climate change and a growing population ,remain at the core of instability in the region. It goes without saying that a military solution alone is not enough to create durable peace and stability. We must strengthen the nexus between security and development actions to ensure long-term stability in the Sahel region.

In that regard, a successful outcome for the Malian peace process remains the cornerstone of stabilization efforts in the region. Moreover, scaling up access to basic services and job opportunities in Mali, as well as other countries in the region, is necessary to reduce the dependence on humanitarian assistance, as outlined in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan.

Finally, let me express our full support for the Special Representative for West Africa and the Special Adviser for the Sahel for their efforts aimed at spearheading the implementation of United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan to ensure continuity of United Nations support to the Sahel region.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Mr. Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their briefings.

The Security Council meets again to consider the situation in the Sahel region, which continues to be very volatile, as shown by the attacks against the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, the international forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. That has a profound impact on the local populations and civilians.

Likewise, challenges in the areas of security, governance and development have increased. The complex security environment persists, including asymmetric threats from armed and terrorist groups, as well as transnational crime, trafficking in drugs and arms and human smuggling and trafficking, among other things. The aforementioned elements not only jeopardize the stability of the countries of the region but also represent a threat to the political peace processes.

All the elements that I have mentioned, added to the lack of adequate sustainable and predictable funding for the Joint Force, have delayed its full and effective operationalization, in addition to it still lacking, among other things, communications equipment, air assets and, above all, training for its members.

In that regard, we commend the significant amount of financial contributions to the Force. However, we underline the urgent need for the support to continue

materializing through the rapid and prompt disbursement of all pledges announced by donors that have not yet been honoured. We emphasize that it is crucial to accelerate the full and effective operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

At the same time, Bolivia has repeatedly reiterated the urgent need to analyse but, above all, identify the structural causes of conflicts. In the specific case of the Sahel, such causes have had a profound impact on the current context of the region. The bloody consequences of interventionism and regime-change policies triggered, in the aftermath of the 2011 conflict in Libya, the collateral destabilization of the Sahel, bringing chaos with disastrous results that continue until today.

Regrettably, in addition to the precarious security situation, the Sahel presents other great challenges. The threat of a large-scale humanitarian crisis and the risk of food insecurity affecting nearly 5 million people, including refugees and displaced persons, not to mention the adverse effects of climate change, further exacerbate the crisis in the region.

Despite the bleak outlook in the Sahel, we would like to emphasize the significant efforts of the regional and subregional organizations, led by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We welcome and commend the efforts and the considerable political will of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in terms of cooperation and operationalization of their forces on the ground. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a great and exemplary demonstration of the coordinated efforts of the African Union and the United Nations.

An example of the great work and effort of the G-5 Sahel is evident in the six joint operations carried out in the border areas, including through the increased deployment of troops. We encourage the States members of the G-5 Sahel to take the necessary measures to consolidate the new operations through the prompt adoption of a timeline for operations and the full deployment of troops.

In addition, we believe the full and complete implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel is vital in terms of a comprehensive framework to strengthen governance, security and development in the Sahel region. We also welcome the launch of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, fine-tuned on the margins of the African Union summit held in Nouakchott in June of this year.

Last but not least, it should be highlighted that almost a year after the adoption of resolution 2391 (2017), there remains much to be done. The refusal of some members of the Council to define the G-5 Sahel Joint Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations has made its deployment and operationalization even more difficult. We believe it crucial that the Security Council take urgent and relevant steps in that regard in order to protect and safeguard the life and integrity of millions of people in the Sahel.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Permanent Secretary Sidikou, High Representative Buyoya and Deputy Secretary-General Serrano for their briefings. I would like to make four points.

First, we must continue to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which faces real difficulties, including the worsening regional security and inadequate operational capabilities, equipment and training, as well as funding shortages. As an important mechanism for the countries in the region to respond to the security challenges independently, the Joint Force represents a significant contribution to peace and security in Africa and the world in general. It requires the continuing support of the international community. We hope that the Joint Force will resume operations as soon as possible.

Secondly, we must promote a political settlement of the regional hotspot issues. The security situation is closely linked to the peace process. On the basis of respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned, the international community should actively support the countries of the region in taking forward the peace process and promoting national reconciliation so as to continue to work towards the continued de-escalation of the relevant hotspot issues and to resolve them, thereby creating conditions conducive to lasting security and stability in the Sahel region. Support should be given to all the relevant parties in Mali in order to expedite the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and seriously address the spillover effect on the Sahel of issues outside the region,

such as the Libyan crisis, in order to minimize their negative impact.

Thirdly, we must adopt a comprehensive approach to tackle the root causes of conflict. The international community should support the Secretary-General in implementing the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. It should also support the priority investment plan developed by the Sahel countries and, in the light of the real needs of the countries and populations in the region, help the Sahel to achieve sustainable development and to enjoy the dividends of peace.

Fourthly, we must ensure that we leverage the role of regional mechanisms. The international community should support African countries in resolving African problems through African solutions, encourage regional and subregional organizations in Africa, such as the G-5 Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, to play a leading role in dealing with the challenges in the Sahel and help the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat to build capacity.

China is ready to work with the international community in continuing to play a constructive role in order to achieve peace, stability and development in the Sahel region and on the African continent.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8403

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8403rd meeting
Friday, 16 November 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu/Mr. Yao Shaojun	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; His Excellency Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security; and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

Mr. Chergui is joining today's meeting via video tele-conference from Addis Ababa.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the joint African Union-United Nations high-level visit to South Sudan, which we undertook from 7 to 9 October. That was the first joint visit that also included UN-Women and focused on strengthening the partnership between our two institutions to achieve inclusive and gender-responsive peace and security in South Sudan. The African Union (AU) was represented by its Commissioner for Peace and Security, my friend and colleague Ambassador Smaïl Chergui; former Vice-President of Uganda, member of the Panel of the Wise and co-Chair of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, or FemWise-Africa, Dr. Specioza Kazibwe; and the Executive Director of UN-Women, my colleague Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. I represented the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

As the Council knows, the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan had just been signed on 12 September, and while it is pivotal to the peace process, scepticism about its ability to deliver a sustainable peace this time around remains a concern. Our objective was to express support for the revitalized peace agreement and to encourage its full and timely implementation, while emphasizing the importance of the representation and meaningful participation of women in the peace process and the need for the Government to ensure a protective environment for civilians, in particular women and girls.

I wish to again commend the mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which was supported by the African Union and international partners and was critical in securing the revitalized agreement. The agreement provides a road map for an inclusive political settlement of the conflict, but its signature is only the first step in a process that still has many challenges ahead. The pre-transitional period is critical and will require the South Sudanese leaders to assume their responsibilities and pave the way for the full implementation of the agreement. Honouring the provisions for women, in particular the guarantee of their 35 per cent representation across the executive arm, the IGAD Council of Ministers and the pre-transitional institutions will be of particular importance to achieving an inclusive and durable peace.

Our consultations in the country were telling in that regard. While hopeful, the confidence of the women we spoke to in Bentiu — both from the town and the protection-of-civilians site — was low. They noted that, despite the agreement, their families were still falling victim to the violence. They stressed that this is not their war. They appealed to us and their leaders not to forget them, to create a protective environment and to ensure that women are included as key actors in the full implementation of the agreement. The women representatives from civil society and the Government in Juba echoed similar sentiments and stressed the need to respect the cessation of hostilities and to prioritize women's engagement in monitoring the quota implementation. They also called on the African Union and the United Nations to use all avenues to encourage their leaders to implement the agreement. It is imperative that women be represented in the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, the Strategic Defence and Security Review Board and the transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms, as stipulated in the agreement. At the

local level, mechanisms enabling their voices to be heard would also be critical.

Turning to developments in South Sudan, although slow, the parties are taking initial steps towards the implementation of the agreement. Since our visit on 15 October, the transitional national legislature has ratified the revitalized agreement, paving the way for its incorporation into the Transitional Constitution. On 21 October, the National Pre-Transitional Committee held its first meeting to begin coordinating activities for the pre-transitional period. The participation of Mr. Riek Machar and other opposition leaders in the peace celebrations on 31 October in Juba, President Kiir's apology to the people of South Sudan for the immense suffering exacted by the conflict, and the release of political prisoners — including two high-profile political opposition detainees — are all positive gestures towards confidence-building and reconciliation.

During the peace celebrations, President Kiir and Riek Machar had a face-to-face meeting that served as a confidence-building event in itself and paved the way for the National Pre-Transitional Committee and the reconstituted National Constitutional Amendment Committee to hold meetings in Juba. To that end, on 5 November the National Constitutional Amendment Committee drafted a constitutional amendment bill, incorporating the agreement into the 2011 Transitional Constitution of South Sudan. In addition, the National Pre-Transitional Committee convened its second meeting on 7 November.

We have also observed some specific localized confidence-building measures in recent weeks between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces — formerly the Sudan People's Liberation Army — and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO), indicating some efforts to open lines of communication. The first was a meeting between the two sides in Pagak, Upper Nile, in October, at which the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and SPLA-IO negotiated free movement in the town. Over the past two weeks, there have been reports of similar discussions in multiple locations across Unity, Jonglei, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Eastern Equatoria and Central Equatoria. We are hopeful that those initial signs of goodwill are a demonstration of a stronger commitment to the current process than that which was seen in 2015.

Notwithstanding those developments, I must continue to stress that there can be no viable or sustainable peace unless the parties adhere to a permanent ceasefire, silence the guns, disengage forces and include women as key players. While significantly reduced, there are still continued reports of fighting between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and opposition forces, and between the SPLA-IO and various break-away factions of the opposition groups in Central Equatoria. Sporadic clashes have also occurred between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and SPLA-IO in various areas of southern Unity, and road ambushes and attacks between the two groups have continued in the Baggari area of Western Bahr el-Ghazal.

Those incidents, together with the continuing intercommunal violence in parts of Jonglei and Lakes, continue to take a toll on civilians and exacerbate displacement and humanitarian needs. Reports of recruitment, including of children, by the parties in several parts of the country also betray our confidence in the parties to implement the agreement in full. The country's leaders and the parties will have to demonstrate their genuine commitment to making difficult decisions and compromises for its effective implementation. In that respect, I cannot overemphasize the crucial role of the Security Council, the African Union, IGAD and the region to continue to hold the parties accountable and ensure that they abide by their obligations under the Agreement. It is clear that the solution to the conflict in South Sudan can only be political and not through military action.

The United Nations stands ready as a continued partner of peace in supporting South Sudan. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) will continue to provide support, performing tasks within the bounds of its mandate. With respect to any possible evolution of the UNMISS mandate, including the Regional Protection Force, it will ultimately be for the Security Council to decide. However, the following principles would need to be applied: first, a continuing priority of the protection of civilians in the mandated tasks of UNMISS; secondly, the need to preserve a single peacekeeping force with one unified command and control structure; and thirdly, that any addition to the force would have to be carried out consistent with the principles of peacekeeping and the standards to which we hold all troop- and police-contributing countries.

We encouraged the parties, as well as IGAD, to engage with us and with Security Council members on these matters. In this vein, during the IGAD chiefs

of defence staff/forces meeting held on 22 October in Khartoum, they mandated an assessment team to explore the possible addition of contingents from countries in the region to the Regional Protection Force. We understand that the assessment team concluded its one-week visit to South Sudan on 10 November.

Consolidating this hard-won peace will be our foremost challenge in the weeks and months ahead, and time will be our greatest enemy. We are all too familiar with the consequences of delayed implementation timelines or realization of peace dividends for the people of South Sudan, who have suffered for far too long.

During our visit, our advice to the authorities was to concretely demonstrate, without delay, their commitment to working together with all stakeholders to develop a detailed plan of action to implement the various aspects of the agreement, including security. A demonstration of such commitment would encourage international partners to play their role. In this regard, we stand ready to engage with the African Union, IGAD and our subregional partners, including with the AU-led African Women Leaders Network and FemWise, to continue to support the implementation of an inclusive and durable peace in South Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chergui.

Mr. Chergui: Mr. President, I, too, wish to thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the joint African Union and United Nations high-level visit to South Sudan, which we undertook from 7 to 9 October. As my colleague and friend Jean-Pierre Lacroix indicated, this was the first joint visit that also included UN-Women as well as the African Union Panel of the Wise and FemWise. Indeed, this mission underscored our resolve to strengthen our institutional partnership aimed at achieving an equitable peace in South Sudan.

I wish to inform the Council that our joint mission provided a similar briefing to the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council at its 800th meeting, held here in Addis Ababa on 10 October. The Peace and Security Council commended President Salva Kiir Mayardit and the other South Sudanese parties for the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, on 12 September. It also recognized that this remains the only viable option for addressing the current political, social, economic and security challenges facing South Sudan and for ensuring lasting peace.

As the Council is aware, the African Union and the United Nations signed the revitalized Agreement as guarantors, which in itself comes with major responsibilities. Therefore, it was only logical to undertake this visit early enough to express support for the revitalized peace Agreement while encouraging the parties to faithfully implement it. The African Union Commission believes that the Agreement offers the South Sudanese a unique window of opportunity to deliver an inclusive, lasting and just peace.

However, as my colleague mentioned, both the AU and the United Nations are very much aware of the scepticism surrounding the ability of the parties to deliver on their commitments. As a result, some international partners are yet to sign as guarantors. However, as the African Union and the United Nations, we felt duty-bound to engage the Government of South Sudan, at the highest levels possible, and emphasize the need for the full implementation of the Agreement and the importance of women's representation in the peace process.

I should like at this point to commend the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), especially the leadership of the Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia in delivering this peace Agreement. The African Union shares the view that the responsibility to fully implement the Agreement now rests with the South Sudanese parties. Therefore, the African Union wishes to convey to the parties that our two organizations can successfully mobilize international support for the current process if the South Sudanese live up to their commitments. I made this point very clearly this morning during the 66th IGAD Council of Ministers meeting here in Addis Ababa.

In this connection, our joint mission underscored the imperative for the Government to create an environment conducive to the return of opposition groups during the pre-interim period. We therefore take note of and applaud the decision by the National Assembly to ratify the revitalized Agreement on 15 October, which paves the way for its incorporation into the transitional Constitution. We now look forward to the successful completion of the work of the National Pre-Transitional Committee aimed at, among other

things, facilitating an environment conducive to an inclusive implementation process.

The coming together of the signatories to the Agreement, including Mr. Riek Machar, during the peace celebrations on 31 October in Juba, gives further hope that the implementation may be on the right track. In this regard, we commend the leaders for making conciliatory and confidence-building statements during those celebrations. During our visit, there was concern over the status of political prisoners as well as prisoners of war. As my friend Jean-Pierre Lacroix stated, their release is a further testament to the fact that the parties are more serious about implementing the current Agreement.

Meanwhile, I wish to inform the Council that on 14 November, the African Union High-level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan met with the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, to exchange views on how best to support the peace process. As the Council will recall, the Ad Hoc Committee is composed of South Africa as Chair, Algeria, Chad, Nigeria and Rwanda. There was consensus that the Ad Hoc Committee should sign the revitalized Agreement as a guarantor, since it had not done so on 12 September. It was also agreed that a meeting would be convened between the Ad Hoc Committee and the IGAD Special Envoy on 19 November to exchange views on the tasks to be undertaken by the member States and the AU Commission.

The Ad Hoc Committee will use the interaction to reach a better understanding and appreciation of the implementation progress, in preparation for its planned visit to South Sudan, to be undertaken soon.

The African Union Inter-Departmental Task Force on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development undertook a mission from 7 November to 9 November to South Sudan. The aim was to ascertain the current and future needs of the African Union, with a view to enhancing its capacities to accompany the people of South Sudan in their efforts to attain lasting peace. The team has reported findings similar to those of our joint mission and has underscored the need to support this revitalized Agreement. The visit will be used to express continental support for the peace process and underscore the fact that there can be no sustainable peace unless the parties adhere to a permanent ceasefire and ensure an inclusive process. This is given the fact that those that are called on to support the peace process, including the AU and the United Nations, can offer their best assistance to the people of South Sudan only in a conflict-free environment. I should therefore like to inform the Council that the AU has been called upon to assist both the independent border commission and the Technical Boundaries Committee. In this light, the ongoing clashes are of concern to our member States.

In this regard, we also note with concern that the National Salvation Front has not yet signed the Agreement and continues to disapprove of it. All efforts should be undertaken to engage the Front on its concerns and ensure that it joins the peace process, especially by those countries that have influence on this movement.

Before I conclude, I wish to commend the United Nations Mission in South Sudan for its excellent work in protecting civilians under very challenging circumstances. The Mission should be supported in whatever way possible to ensure that it accomplishes its assigned tasks. I wish also to commend the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, and pledge the AU's continued support to the two institutions. We call on them to provide IGAD, the AU and the United Nations with timely reports and proposals on how to proficiently support the Agreement, and our Councils should stand ready to respond appropriately.

I fully concur that the agreement provides an unparalleled opportunity for the people of South Sudan to realize lasting peace. The success of the implementation process will require considerable coordination and cooperation between our organizations and IGAD. There can be no doubt that some challenges will emerge. Therefore, we should all be prepared to address them in a swift and coordinated manner. Such coordinated approaches would help us to persuasively insist on an inclusive implementation process that ensures that the interests of all communities would be catered to, if not already accommodated in the agreement.

Last but not least, the gender dimension of the joint visit showed that, unfortunately, violence against women has not stopped, and we must devote more effort and attention to that critical issue. Let me say once again that, sooner or later, justice will be done.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Chergui for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council today on our joint African Union (AU)-United Nations mission to South Sudan, which was the first-ever of its kind undertaken by UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), undertaken jointly with the AU, represented by Mr. Chergui and Ms. Specioza Kazibwe of FemWise. That augurs well for reinforcing the nexus linking development, peace and security, and humanitarian assistance. In our meeting with the Government of South Sudan, that was also appreciated.

Our collaboration with DPKO is an important development, given the role that it plays in mission settings as a peacekeeper, peacemaker and protector of civilians, a considerable number of whom are women. In their own right, women are defenders of peace and are critical to invest in for the sustainability of all peace efforts. I join my colleagues in commending South Sudan on the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and I welcome the important provisions of the agreement that address women, especially the 35 per cent quota for women in the composition of the executive branch of the revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity of the Republic of South Sudan. The women truly welcomed the agreement and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities. They called on all leaders of warring factions and armed parties to communicate with their followers and inform them of the peace agreement, as the fighting had not completely subsided. They also said that the same message must be conveyed to militias and non-organized forces. They are anxious for progress and are forging ahead with reconciliation, even though among themselves, as women, they had no disputes or hostilities to resolve.

What they had in common, as they said, was that they all found themselves caught up in a man's war in which they all had been victims of sexual assault, their families were killed, and their livelihoods destroyed. They had no access to the leaders in their country, who, they said, were responsible for the crisis. They are asking us, as the United Nations and African Union, to help them ensure their contact with the leaders and that the leaders are held accountable. They believe that implementing the 35 per cent affirmative action quota is critical at all levels and within all branches of the Government, not just at the national executive level. Furthermore, women want to ensure that the constitutional review process includes them so that their needs and concerns are considered right from the start. They requested the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU to ensure the continuous monitoring of the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the agreement and that the monitoring process begins now with the pre-transitional structures.

We have been reviewing events in South Sudan since our mission. We are concerned that, despite the guarantees, the parties have yet to honour their commitment to ensuring women's meaningful participation in the implementation of the revitalized agreement. In particular, honouring the 35 per cent affirmative action principle has yet to take root. Of the new bodies, the National Pre-Transitional Committee now has 10 members, one of whom is a woman, amounting to 10 per cent. The National Constitution Amendment Committee has 15 members, two of whom are women. There are no women in the Independent Boundaries Commission, the Technical Boundaries Committee or the Joint Transitional Security Committee. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism is also expected to include 31 per cent women. None of those recently formed institutions meets the 35 per cent quota. It is important that we not fail to overlook those statistics and take appropriate corrective action.

That is where members of the Security Council come in. They can be of support. They can encourage the parties to ensure that women are included in a timely manner before it is too late. I urge IGAD and African Union colleagues to ensure that the peace agreement is also implemented in a manner that honours the commitments made.

The women also urged that they be included in security sector reform and security institutions so that those institutions can properly fulfil their role in protecting all the people of South Sudan, including women and girls. They outlined the importance of being included as women in leadership and participatory roles so that the security institutions are reconstituted in a manner that is gender-sensitive and focuses on the protection of civilians from gender-based violence, including the protection of all citizens — men and women alike. The inclusion of women is also essential for reorganized security forces, and, with the recruitment of women at a minimal level of 35 per cent into commissioned and non-commissioned cadres, to change the face of the security forces and curb negative

masculinities, prioritize gender within disarmament and demobilization, including in the organization of cantonments, and strengthen accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. South Sudanese women stand ready to meaningfully participate in bringing peace to their country. They want women in the diaspora to also play a role in South Sudan.

Women see our briefing today as an opportunity to make sure that members of the Council are aware of their appreciation of the revitalized agreement, as well as their commitment to taking their destiny into their own hands, while paying attention to the threats posed to the full implementation of the agreement. They want their keen interest to participate to also be seen as a willingness to play a constructive role in the success of the peace agreement. The women fear systematic exclusion and need to be assured that reparations will take into account what they have suffered and what they have lost, including in the aftermath of surviving sexual violence. They highlighted that it is crucial that the Transitional Justice Mechanism deter and punish sexual and gender-based violence, and called for accountability mechanisms for transitional justice, including the hybrid court for South Sudan. They also called for the participation of civil society organizations in the implementation and monitoring processes, which will ensure the inclusion of women's leadership, voice and agency. The appreciation of the women of this particular agreement was encouraging, and they see it as a real opportunity to deal with one of the most devastating conflicts in the world today, through the prism of gender equality.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and DPKO for their efforts to promote women's participation and protection under very challenging circumstances and the manner in which they are able to collaborate and cooperate with the Government of South Sudan. The women with whom we met were very grateful for the existence of the peacekeeping mission and trusted their lives to UNMISS. We also discussed issues affecting female peacekeepers and how the United Nations can attract more female peacekeepers.

That is a commendable peace agreement, and we are ready to support it in any way that we can and ensure the success of its implementation. I ask the Security Council to join us, with the team that visited South Sudan, in insisting that the parties do everything to make sure that the very important commitments are met and delivered.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Commissioner Chergui and Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka for sharing their impressions from their October visit to South Sudan and their perspectives on recent developments in the country.

The United States appreciates the continued collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union on South Sudan, particularly the emphasis on the role of women in the ongoing peace process. We have consistently seen the marginalization of women in South Sudan in previous peace processes. It is time for the voices of women to be heard and for their contributions to be genuinely taken into account. Regarding recent developments in South Sudan, the United States, the international community and, most importantly, the South Sudanese people have started to hear encouraging rhetoric from South Sudan's leaders on some topics.

We have heard about a new era of peace and prosperity, an admission of responsibility for actions that spurred horrific violence and a promise of forgiveness across party lines. We have heard leaders commit to reconciliation and healing and pledge to include all parties in the political process, particularly civil society and women. We have also noted some progress on the deliverables of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The National Pre-Transitional Committee is now established. Permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangement workshops have been held, with the promise of more to follow. Some political prisoners and prisoners of war have been released.

While we acknowledge those initial steps, we cannot ignore clear evidence from the ground that runs counter to the lofty rhetoric of South Sudan's leaders. Violent conflict continues in parts of the country and Government and opposition groups continue to perpetrate atrocities against civilians. Individuals or entities who conduct those attacks against civilians or who take any action that extends or expands conflict

should be targeted with sanctions. Many political prisoners remain in custody, with no prospect of a free or fair trial or any hope of release, including Peter Biar Ajak, who was arbitrarily detained at the Juba airport in late July. We also remain deeply concerned that journalists and civil society organizations face ongoing intimidation and censure. Humanitarian workers continue to be blocked both physically and bureaucratically from delivering life-saving assistance through taxes and fees, expulsion, detainment and even physical harm.

Peace in South Sudan is possible only if its political leaders match their actions to their rhetoric and make the necessary commitments to following through on their own agreements. A key component of implementing the peace agreement is the provision of security in Juba and creating the conditions to establish the new Government. Security arrangements must be made in the open and in coordination with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. We commend regional actors, particularly the Sudan and Uganda, for their leadership and commitment in supporting peace in South Sudan. We are counting on them to uphold the arms embargo that is preventing the flow of weapons into South Sudan, which would destabilize the country and the region. We note the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's ongoing assessment of the feasibility of regional support to enhance security in Juba.

We underscore that any decision to reconfigure the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is the prerogative of the Security Council and must not impact the impartiality of the Mission or its current mandated tasks, which are vital to the well-being and safety of hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese. While the peace celebration held in Juba on 31 October delivered to the world images of enthusiasm and joy at the prospect of peace in South Sudan, what remains first and foremost in our minds is the reality of the conflict-induced suffering of the South Sudanese people. The United States continues to support the people of South Sudan and their aspirations to freedom, peace and prosperity. In doing so, we continue to call on the leaders of South Sudan to stop the violence, match rhetoric with tangible actions and move swiftly to implement past agreements and build on a fragile peace.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Commissioner Chergui and UN-Women Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka for their comprehensive briefing. We welcome the joint visit to South Sudan that took place in October, and see it as an example of enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, which can be instrumental to advancing the peace process in South Sudan.

I visited Juba in June in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, and my observations on the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation broadly concur with the information we just received. During my visit, including in the protection-of-civilians camps, I witnessed an immense scale of human suffering and saw with my own eyes the devastating effect of the conflict in South Sudan on the civilian population, especially the most vulnerable — women and children.

The major difference between my visit and our briefers' joint field mission is the political context and the fact that, in September, South Sudanese parties signed a revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Poland welcomes that development and sees it as a significant step in the peace process. At this point, I would like to commend the determination of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and its member States to broker a new peace agreement in South Sudan.

Two months after the singing of the new agreement, we have seen some encouraging events. The peace process, however, is still fragile, some areas of concern remain and the civilian population is yet to experience the dividends of peace. We are seriously concerned about reports of the deliberate targeting of civilians, serious human rights violations and abuses, sexual and gender-based violence, the alarming levels of food insecurity and the continued impediments to humanitarian assistance.

The immediate end of violence is a precondition to the improvement of the situation of the South Sudanese population. It is therefore critical that all parties immediately observe the provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access of December 2017. We also believe that the transitional security arrangements need to be put in place without any further delay.

We are also convinced that no agreements will be durable without inclusiveness. We welcome the inclusion in the revitalized agreement of the provisions on women's representation in the pre-transition,

transitional and other decision-making bodies and institutions. We stress the importance of putting those provisions into practice. It is our strong belief that South Sudanese women can play a vital role in peacebuilding and State-building, as well as reconciliation efforts. In that context, I would like to emphasize the necessity of providing a more protective environment for women and girls in South Sudan.

The people of South Sudan want peace more than anything else, and after years of suffering they urgently deserve it. They deserve stability, food security, education for their children and State institutions that care for citizens, protect them and provide them with basic services. With the revitalized peace agreement, the leaders of South Sudan have a unique opportunity to rebuild the country. We truly believe that this time all signatories will demonstrate real commitment and determination to bring durable peace and stability to South Sudan.

Last but not least — and as always, when we discuss the issue of South Sudan in the Council — let me take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for its tireless efforts in extremely difficult circumstances. We thank UNMISS personnel and praise the Mission's role in the protection of civilians and ensuring an environment conducive to humanitarian actors to deliver their assistance.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this briefing of the Security Council, focusing on the consideration of the developments in the situation in South Sudan and the extent of the challenges facing that country. We would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, for the quality of their briefings. My delegation also welcomes the recent joint visit of their respective organizations to South Sudan.

Côte d'Ivoire follows with interest the development of the situation in South Sudan, which calls for comments on the political process, security issues and the humanitarian and human rights situation.

With regard to the political process, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the leaders of the region and all other bilateral and multilateral partners, which led to the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 12 September. In that regard, my country welcomes the return of Mr. Riek Machar, First Vice-President of South Sudan, to Juba on 31 October.

However, my delegation remains concerned about the difficulties with regard to the full and inclusive implementation of the revitalized Agreement, which should promote a return to peace, thereby offering the South Sudanese people the prospects for development and a decent life to which they have aspired for a little over five years.

My delegation therefore reaffirms its support for the ongoing political process. In that regard, it urges the South Sudanese parties to join the current positive regional dynamic for a return to peace and stability, with the support of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners.

My country believes that the political process should also be extended to women, who are underrepresented in the institutions entrusted with implementing the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Unfortunately, we note the presence of only one woman on the National Pre-transitional Committee, which monitors the implementation of the Agreement, that is, a rate of 10 per cent, which is well below the 35 per cent envisaged.

On the security front, my delegation notes with regret the acts of vandalism and the attacks against the population by certain armed groups. We therefore believe that, in order to address that troubling situation, there is a compelling need to pay particular attention to the thorny issue of the unification of the army.

Côte d'Ivoire would also like to urge the Government of South Sudan to work harder to end hostilities and to ensure the protection of civilians. It further calls on the Government of South Sudan to implement the necessary security sector reforms, at the heart of the revitalized Agreement, and to implement, in collaboration with the other South Sudanese parties, the arrangements contained in the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between Parties of the Conflict of South Sudan.

The humanitarian and human rights situation remains equally alarming. My country notes with great concern the persistence of sexual violence, violence against children and attacks on humanitarian workers, as well as obstacles to helping those in need.

My delegation also condemns the kidnappings and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Given that situation, Côte d'Ivoire would like to reaffirm the need for the effective implementation of the principle of accountability so that the perpetrators of human rights violations are held accountable for their acts before the competent international judicial bodies. My delegation urges the South Sudanese leadership to create security conditions conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance and to the safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their areas of origin.

In conclusion, my country believes that only the determined commitment of the South Sudanese leadership in good faith can ensure the success of the peace process and reassure international partners. In the same vein, it is necessary that the South Sudanese authorities comply with the requirement for transparency in the management of oil revenues.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Smaïl Chergui and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for their very enlightening briefings. I would like to mention three major issues of concern for France.

First, the difficult situation and the suffering of women in South Sudan, who remain marginalized. That was the main focus of the joint mission that the briefers conducted as part of the women and peace and security agenda. I thank them for having done that. It was essential in order to highlight that common priority. It was also an important example of the joint work of the United Nations and the African Union.

France shares the comments that the briefers made and is deeply concerned about the seriousness of the facts brought to light in the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250), which highlights hundreds of cases of gang rape and genital mutilation used as weapons of war, often leaving irreparable scars. France condemns in the strongest terms those criminal acts, of which women and children, because they are the most vulnerable, are the primary victims.

We urge that the joint communiqués and commitments be fully implemented, that those responsible be identified, tried and punished, including those in the ranks of the army and that the protection of women, as well as the investigative mechanisms, be strengthened. In that regard, France calls on the South Sudanese authorities to strengthen the specialized police units by ensuring women's access to them. We support the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), UN-Women and Special Representative Pramila Patten to ensure that what has been promised on paper is translated into action and made a reality.

France hopes that the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan makes full use of the sanctions against those who commit and sponsor sexual violence. The cooperation between the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, UNMISS and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict is essential in that regard.

The situation of children is also extremely worrying. The report of the Secretary-General on that subject reminds us that since 2014, more than 600 children have been victims of sexual violence (see S/2018/865, para. 54), and those are only verified violations. The actual number is undoubtedly much higher. We must act, and we welcome the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, has visited the field, as has the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, which will discuss the draft conclusions in the coming days.

The second major issue that I wish to address today is the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed on 12 September. It provides for the involvement of women and young people in the peace process, which is crucial and which, I hope, will guarantee its success.

The signing of the Agreement is an encouraging development, which, on behalf of France, I wish to once again commend. My country hopes that the Agreement reached will lead to a lasting and inclusive peace. That is our hope and that of millions of South Sudanese women and men who yearn for peace and a better life. We do not want peace on paper alone.

The current period is crucial for the success of the peace. Now is the time to build trust among the parties, strengthen the ceasefire, win the support of the people, and make the security and institutional arrangements necessary for the implementation of the Agreement. In that regard, we welcome the holding of the first meeting of the National Pre-transitional Committee in Khartoum on 21 and 22 October. We call on the parties to continue in that direction.

Finally, on the third issue, I would like to say a word about the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, which must continue to mobilize us. Seven million South Sudanese still need humanitarian aid and nearly half of the population is severely malnourished. The first signs of the positive impact of the peace agreement in terms of improving the food situation and humanitarian access are encouraging. It is essential that they endure over the long term. It is also crucial to do everything possible to protect humanitarian personnel, who continue to be the target of attacks, and to continue our efforts to ensure that such crimes do not go unpunished.

The Security Council can count on France's ongoing commitment with regard to such issues.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Commissioner Smaïl Chergui and Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for their respective briefings.

The African Union-United Nations joint mission to South Sudan, which took place at the beginning of October, could not have been more timely. It provided an opportunity to express support for the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and to shed light on the remaining challenges that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The inclusion of women in the implementation of the revitalized Agreement needs particular attention. We are encouraged by the expressed commitment of the parties to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. The perpetrators of that crime should be held to account as a matter of urgency. We also have no doubt that the provisions of the revitalized Agreement, which stipulate the fair participation of women in the executive as well as other branches of the Government, will be implemented faithfully.

It is opportune that this meeting is taking place following today's extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers in Addis Ababa to discuss the situation in South Sudan. The implementation of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan remains the only viable option to ensure lasting peace in South Sudan and address the current political, social, economic and security challenges facing the country. We understand the scepticism about the implementation of the revitalized agreement. However, the signing of the agreement by the majority of the parties to the conflict, as well as the positive developments that followed, clearly indicate the commitment of the parties to implement the revitalized agreement.

The fighting across the country has decreased significantly. The National Pre-transitional Committee has started its work to establish a road map for the transitional period in South Sudan. The peace celebration day event in Juba on 31 October under the theme "Celebrating the Dawn of Peace, Appreciating Friends, Cherishing Reconciliation and Unity", which took place in the presence of the leaders of countries of the region, sent a strong message to the people of South Sudan of the commitment of the parties to fully implementing the peace agreement. Countries of the region have expressed their readiness to help them in that endeavour.

The international community has a historic opportunity to end the cycle of vicious violence in South Sudan and bring about tangible results to the country's people, who have suffered for far too long. That opportunity should not be allowed to slip away simply because earlier attempts have failed to bring about the desired results. As there is no plan B, it is imperative to seize the momentum. The full support of the international community for the implementation of the peace agreement is critically important. All possible efforts should therefore be made in support of the successful completion of the pre-transitional period.

The Security Council has a particular role to play in ensuring the implementation of the revised peace agreement. IGAD has requested the support of the Council in ensuring the full deployment of the Regional Protection Force and a further review of its mandate so that it will be in a better position to support the implementation of the revised peace agreement. We hope the Council will respond positively to that request. The Chiefs of Staff of the IGAD countries have been working to assess the operational needs and the additional tasks of the Regional Protection Force in the light of the revised peace agreement and the current situation on the ground. The results of those assessments will be communicated to the Council as soon as they become available.

The support and assistance to IGAD and other parties provided so far by the African Union, the United Nations, IGAD partners and the wider international community should be extended to the implementation

of the agreement as well. Maintaining unity of purpose among IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations in the quest for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan still remains vital in the post-revitalization period. IGAD is resolved more than ever to ensure that the agreement is implemented. Improvements in the relations among countries of the region would add impetus to the successful implementation of the agreement.

Even though we are encouraged by the progress made so far, we would like to underscore the importance of nurturing trust among the parties for the full implementation of the revitalized agreement. More confidence-building measures should be undertaken and, in that regard, we welcome the holding of meetings in Yei and Kajo-keji between senior field commanders of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the agreements reached between them. Confidence-building measures of that kind should continue because without them it will be difficult to proceed to the transitional period. We would also like to highlight the urgency of implementing the pre-transitional period tasks as stipulated in the peace agreement's implementation matrix to lay the foundation for the transitional period. The longer the pre-transitional period takes, the less likely it will be to make meaningful progress. We hope the parties will stay committed to doing so.

Ensuring the further reduction of conflict and the total cessation hostilities is critically important. While it is a necessary condition for the implementation of the peace agreement, silencing the guns in South Sudan would also facilitate the delivery of much-need humanitarian assistance. The parties need to prioritize the implementation of the permanent ceasefire on cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. The restoration of a permanent ceasefire is essential for unhindered access to the affected population and the safety of humanitarian personnel and assistance delivery.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security for their briefings and for their visit to South Sudan from 7 to 10 October in order to closely assess the situation there.

Today I will address three issues: the transitional process, the role and empowerment of women and humanitarian concerns.

With regard to the transitional process, the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan turned a new page in the history of that country. As we reiterate our support for the peace process in all its phases and welcome the decrease in hostilities, we express our concern about some individuals who continue their violations against the security and safety of the people of South Sudan, who aspire to peace, reconciliation, justice and development.

With regard to the role and empowerment of women, lessons can be learned from war — and one of them is that women are its main victims. They are also the ones who first call for peace. Their role in negotiations, transitions and sustainable peace is important and vital. Women should not suffer from war and their role should not be disregarded in peace. According to what we have heard today and to what was stipulated in the revitalized Agreement on the quota of women, they deserve to participate more in decision-making. We look forward to the completion of legal procedures on the establishment of a hybrid court for South Sudan to implement the Peace Agreement so that justice will reign and women, men and children can enjoy justice.

With regard to humanitarian concerns, many problems continue to destabilize peace, such as the inability of approximately 4.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons to return, the fact that nearly 70 per cent of children are unable to go to school and the increase in the cost of daily living. Successfully achieving peace in South Sudan hinges upon addressing those humanitarian challenges. Any step that does not take into account the participation of women, the education of children and ending hunger will face the most difficult obstacles. Only by seriously addressing those challenges will South Sudan reap the benefits of security and stability.

Let me recall the presidential order of November 2017, which removed taxes on humanitarian workers. We encourage the Government of South Sudan to continue implementing that order. We call on parties that still hinder humanitarian work and access to assistance to stop their inhumane practices, as innocent people in need are paying the price.

In conclusion, we thank the Government of South Sudan for cooperating with the joint African Union-United Nations delegation, and we encourage it to continue its cooperation with both organizations in order to serve the interests of South Sudan and its friendly people.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Chergui and Executive Director of UN-Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for their briefings and their very active engagement in South Sudan, including in their joint visit to the country. I think that the visit serves to show the strong partnership between the African Union and the United Nations, which is very welcome.

The briefers brought to our attention the horrible and difficult situation for many women and girls in South Sudan and the need for meaningful political participation for them.

I just returned from South Sudan last week, having led a visit of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The historic and significant developments in the Horn of Africa, triggered by the reconciliation process between Eritrea and Ethiopia, have dramatically changed the dynamics in the region and opened a new chapter of peace and cooperation. Those dynamics also provide new positive momentum for South Sudan, which needs to be built on. In that regard, I want to commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the facilitators for their efforts in having reached the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Agreement is now the only game in town. We must all weigh in to ensure its implementation.

I was in South Sudan for only three days, but the people all testified to a new atmosphere of hope for peace. The region's continued engagement in monitoring progress and holding the parties to account will be vital. The Council must continue to support their efforts. We believe that the Council should be actively engaged, and that means acknowledging progress made by the South Sudanese parties as well as pointing out where they fall short of their commitments.

What is needed now is a clear political will to implement what has been agreed upon and to engage in genuine peacebuilding and reconciliation. We welcome the steps taken so far, including the reduced levels of fighting. At the same time, we are concerned by continued reports of military clashes. A complete cessation of hostilities by all parties, the Government and armed groups alike, must be unconditional, as all of the briefers have pointed out. That is a prerequisite for a meaningful political process. There must be consequences for violations of the Agreement, including targeted measures against those who incite violence or seek to derail the peace process.

The spirit of inclusiveness must be safeguarded in the coming political process. The process will be viable only if it includes all stakeholders, in particular youth, women and civil society. In that regard, we strongly welcome the provisions for including 35 per cent women in the transitional Government, as an increase in the political representation of women is crucial for lasting peace.

Part of the way forward will also be advancing accountability and transitional justice mechanisms, including through establishing a hybrid court. The culture of impunity for crimes committed in the conflict, not least acts of sexual violence, must come to an end. Sexual and gender-based violence is now a stand-alone sanctions criterion, which should serve as a stern reminder.

We also remain strongly concerned by the continued dire humanitarian situation. Rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of relief across South Sudan must be assured. Humanitarian workers are doing admirable work and must be allowed to carry out their work safely. I have stressed the need for the Government to build trust and support all the people working on the humanitarian side. Revisiting the issue of registration fees is one of the urgent ways for the Government to move forward.

The conflict in South Sudan has had a devastating effect on the children in the country and has left deep scars in the next generation. The revitalized Peace Agreement represents an opportunity to now finally turn a corner and make the protection of children a priority. We were encouraged by the commitment to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict expressed by our interlocutors during the visit, but action is key.

The demobilization, release and reintegration of hundreds of children in 2018 and the recent accession by the Government to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on children and armed conflict, are important positive steps. During the visit we presented recommendations to the Government

on the way forward. That included the need to work with the United Nations to expand the current action plan, which is focused on recruitment, into a comprehensive action plan that would address all grave violations against children.

Another important recommendation that we made was to continue to facilitate the release and reintegration of children as part of the implementation of the peace Agreement, and to allocate sufficient funds for the reintegration of former child soldiers. In that regard, the Security Council should also consider whether the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan should be adjusted to that new situation, including the possibility of adding a stronger emphasis on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the capacity-building component.

We also undertook a field visit to the towns of Bor and Pibor, in the eastern parts of the country. We met with children affected by the armed conflict and visited reintegration programmes for former child soldiers. It became very clear that the reintegration of children cannot take place in a vacuum. If there are no schools or health services, then reintegration will not lead to the desired results, neither for the victims nor for society as a whole. Hopefully, the Agreement now signed will also trigger the Government, with the support of the international community, to invest in long-term development.

Protecting the children of South Sudan is our moral obligation. But it is also an investment for the future, critical to prevent conflict and sustain peace. The challenges ahead for the country are immense, and the path to peace will be very difficult. We must not be naive, but the revitalized Peace Agreement provides an opportunity that now must be seized. The Council should step up its engagement in the next few months and work closely with the region, while encouraging progress and making sure that the parties live up to their commitments. Including women and protecting children should be a priority, for all of the reasons that we heard in the briefings today.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): May I thank all of the briefers for sharing their assessment of progress in South Sudan following the visit. It is important and welcome to see such joint African Union-United Nations activity.

The signing of the revised Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, in September, was a significant moment in the peace process. Let me again publicly take the opportunity to welcome that important step taken by the parties. We also applaud the role of the region. The deal would not have been agreed without the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and in particular by Ethiopia, the Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. We welcome their engagements in monitoring progress and holding the parties to account for implementing the Agreement. If I understood the Ethiopian Ambassador correctly, let me also welcome IGAD's intention to approach the Security Council to discuss any proposal to deploy troops to support the Agreement.

As our briefers made clear, some significant progress has been made since the revised Peace Agreement was signed, which we warmly welcome. That includes in particular the establishment of key transitional bodies, the return of Riek Machar and other opposition leaders to Juba for the Peace Day celebrations, the release of some prisoners and the holding of National Pre-transition Committee meetings, all of which is to be welcomed. I was struck by the Swedish Ambassador's comment about the tangible sense of hope that he perceived while he was there and that everything we do must be to sustain that hope.

Despite the promising start, we remain concerned that several fundamental provisions of the Agreement are yet to be implemented and the targets set out in the time frame are being missed. We are deeply concerned by the reports of continued violence, in particular around Wau and Yei, which threatens to undermine the Agreement and violate the commitments made by all parties in the cessation of hostilities, numerous ceasefire agreements and the revised Peace Agreement. We are also concerned that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism are being denied access to areas, such as south of Wau, to carry out their, including monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire as mandated by the Council and IGAD.

Secondly, we have yet to see the full and unfettered humanitarian access that has been repeatedly promised. That has been improved in some areas, but elsewhere obstructions continue, including around greater Bagari, where access was denied for several months early this year, and has recently been blocked again, and where we know there are people in famine-like conditions.

Bureaucratic obstructions also continue, including taxes and fees that divert tens of millions of dollars from providing food, water and shelter for the most vulnerable in South Sudan. We call on the Government to South Sudan to introduce a temporary waiver from income taxes for international stuff of humanitarian and development organizations, as well as a waiver from other taxes, fees and permit costs and fees for as long as the current acute humanitarian crisis continues. We call on the opposition to cease attempts to impose illegal charges. As of September, the World Food Programme assessed that 6.1 million people, over half of the population, were facing severe food insecurity. The humanitarian community is in South Sudan as a lifesaver, not a revenue raiser.

Thirdly, more must be done to ensure that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is supported across South Sudanese society. That includes increasing the transparency of Government revenue so that the people of South Sudan can see that it is being used for their benefit. Fundamental rights and basic freedoms must also be respected, including the freedom of expression, the opening of civic space and the release of the political detainees that are still being held. To build confidence in the peace Agreement, its implementation must be truly inclusive. We welcome the focus of the visit on women's participation. I found the words of the Executive Director of UN-Women particularly important in that regard during her briefing today. I especially noted her comments on the security institutions, the need to end gender based violence and the need to ensure the representation of women. We know that female involvement in peace processes makes them much more likely to be sustained. That is in everybody's interest.

Tackling impunity will also be essential to building confidence in the peace process and preventing future grave violations. We call on the Government of South Sudan to sign the memorandum of understanding with the African Union to establish the hybrid court to ensure perpetrators are held to account for their appalling crimes.

I want in particular to highlight our concern about the impact of the conflict in South Sudan on children. The Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2018/865) finds that children have been deliberately targeted and killed, very young girls have been subjected to gruesome gang rape and children have been abducted and their schools have been destroyed. We welcome the recent visit of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as mentioned by the Swedish Ambassador, and the work on a comprehensive action plan to address that issue. We urge the signatories of the action plans to implement them in full.

Let me conclude by repeating that we are strong supporters of the peace deal and we applaud the efforts of the region in achieving it. There has been welcome progress, but there needs to be so much more. It is essential that the parties demonstrate their commitment to the agreement by addressing all outstanding issues urgently. That is because it is the people of South Sudan who are suffering most from hunger and from violence. It is for the sake of the people that we must all redouble our efforts.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the joint African Union-United Nations delegation that visited South Sudan for their excellent briefing. We welcome the visit made by this joint delegation, led by Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who travelled to South Sudan to help underpin the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in Ethiopia in September, which reflects the importance of women's participation in the peace process in South Sudan. We also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for her comprehensive briefing to the Security Council.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea is concerned about reports of persistent sexual violations in South Sudan, which is why we urge the parties to the conflict to fulfil their commitments to punish sexual violence, including by removing the perpetrators of such crimes from the armed and security forces and protecting the victims. We note the trial initiated by the Government of South Sudan against 11 soldiers accused of rape, and we urge it to continue to work in collaboration with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to ensure accountability in responding to the needs of women and girls affected by rape.

We remind the parties of their obligation to create an environment in which women and girls are not threatened and can go about their lives in an

environment where they are not so easily sexually abused. The Council must make it a priority to find a definitive solution to the situation.

We believe that the participation of women in the political process in South Sudan is indispensable because when women intervene in the resolution of a conflict, they help to keep the family together and contribute their work to the solution of educational, social and economic development problems. Consequently, the duty of women in South Sudan is to be present in the endorsement, implementation and verification of the final agreements to put an end to the conflict. It is said that to properly educate a woman means to properly educate a society.

Equatorial Guinea unequivocally deplores sexual violence in armed conflict and in times of peace, as well as the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We believe that it is one of the worst attacks on human dignity and we share the deep concern that everyone in the Council feels about the growing trend of those unacceptable acts in the world. We would like to highlight the exceptional work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, the appointment of a Victims' Rights Advocate and the commitment to zero-tolerance of that type of abuse.

Equatorial Guinea would like to call on the parties involved in conflicts to commit themselves to ensuring the protection of civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law — always taking into account the primary responsibility of national Governments in that regard, respecting the sovereignty of countries and supporting their efforts in the implementation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

We cannot isolate violence, including sexual violence, from the root causes of conflict. Peace cannot be achieved without investing in the sustainable development of countries and in gender equality. That is the most effective conflict prevention strategy. In that regard, we would like to acknowledge the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including their clear focus on people-driven sustainable development, anchored in gender equality, women's empowerment and equitable economic growth between countries and within countries.

We would also like to acknowledge the collaborative framework and the commitment of the African Union and the United Nations to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and to the fight against sexual violence in armed conflicts, the impunity of the perpetrators of such atrocities and accountability for the crimes.

Equatorial Guinea reaffirms the key role of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), resolution 1820 (2008) and other related resolutions in ensuring the participation and empowerment of women in conflicts and promoting actions to prevent sexual violence in such situations.

In conclusion, in conflict situations and in international responses to them, Equatorial Guinea would like to recommend the coordinated implementation of good practices in the training of all contingents recruited in predeployment preparations by the organizations in charge of coordinating peacebuilding missions, through the integration of a gender perspective and rigorous training on sexual exploitation and abuse. We also recommend ongoing support for the various elements of the United Nations architecture for combating sexual violence in armed conflict and for their collaboration with United Nations agencies responsible for counter-terrorism, organized crime, humanitarian response and sustainable development, with a view to ensuring the recovery and reintegration of victims, especially children born of sexual violence and women who have survived such indignities.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to start by thanking all three briefers for the valuable joint visit to South Sudan last month, and for their briefings today in the Council. I would like to also thank them for emphasizing the need for tangible action to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the political process and in future security arrangements. In the light of that, I want to reiterate that the women of South Sudan should be at the centre of all of our efforts. It is they who suffer most from the ongoing brutal and widespread fighting. It is they who dared to call for peace long before their political leaders were willing to listen. Today I would like to make three points on the following topics in support of the women of South Sudan — the implementation of the revitalized peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, accountability, and unhindered access for the

United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian actors.

My first point concerns the implementation of the peace Agreement, whose signing we welcome, and we thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union for its leadership in that regard. We also welcome the ratification of the Agreement by South Sudan's National Assembly. We are nonetheless concerned about reports of ongoing fighting in Wau, Yei and Unity states. The full implementation of the peace Agreement, and success in silencing the guns in South Sudan, constitutes the only way forward. However, successful implementation will require women's full and meaningful participation, as they offer a vital perspective in the analysis of conflict. It is also they who show leadership in building bridges between opposing factions. Their full and meaningful participation increases the inclusiveness, transparency and sustainability of peace processes. That is why the Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly welcomes the 35 per cent quota for women's participation in the South Sudan Agreement and would like to encourage all parties to meet the quota and ensure the meaningful participation of women in all instruments and processes related to the peace Agreement.

That brings me to my second point, the need for accountability. The Kingdom of the Netherlands underlines the importance of chapter V of the peace Agreement, which deals with accountability and transitional justice. There can be no sustainable peace if impunity persists. That clearly also applies to sexual violence in conflict. As we highlighted during the Arria Formula meeting of 22 October, we must move from a culture of impunity to a culture of deterrence. That is why we remind all parties in South Sudan that the Security Council has the ability to sanction perpetrators of sexual violence. However, sanctions can never be a substitute for full accountability, which is why we echo the call by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 10 October for the signing of the memorandum of understanding on establishing a hybrid court. We also welcome the signing of a joint communiqué on the prevention of sexual violence by the Government of South Sudan, and call for its full implementation. Ensuring justice is essential for reconciliation and for paving the way for sustainable peace.

My third point concerns the need for unhindered access for UNMISS and humanitarian actors. UNMISS personnel risk their lives on a daily basis to provide security to civilians throughout South Sudan. We urge UNMISS to continue to strengthen its forward-leaning posture in order to protect civilians from physical violence, including sexual violence. We regret that we continue to see reports of violations of the status-of-forces agreement, and again urge the Government of South Sudan to ensure full freedom of movement for UNMISS. We also urge full and unhindered access for humanitarian workers, as they are providing essential support to the population. The peace Agreement provides an opportunity to strengthen the people's resilience. That especially helps women and children, and with them, the future of South Sudan. Humanitarian actors are on the front line of those efforts, sometimes paying the highest price.

In conclusion, there is light at the end of the tunnel. The signing of the peace Agreement represents a historic step, but the work is not done. In fact, it has just started. Let us work together to ensure that this light shines for all the people of South Sudan and that women play a decisive role in shaping the future.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Smaïl Chergui, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their detailed information about their joint visit to South Sudan.

The Russian Federation has consistently held the view that the situation of women, like that of the country's entire civilian population, will significantly improve as the South Sudanese peace process advances. The key to stabilizing the Republic of South Sudan lies in a sustainable ceasefire and the start of an inclusive national reconciliation process. In that regard, we attach great importance to the signing by the parties on 12 September of the revitalized peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Needless to say, the agreements reached will still require a significant clarification of the details, but that makes them no less important. The main thing is that the South Sudanese parties have shown their willingness to reach a compromise and their desire to settle their existing disputes by peaceful means.

I would like to once again pay tribute to the coordinated mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which made it possible to reach a successful conclusion to the

revitalization process for South Sudan's peace Agreement. The countries of the region have essentially achieved the impossible by restarting the negotiation process from scratch and for more than a year patiently helping the parties to find points of convergence. IGAD kept the initiative to revitalize the Agreement moving forward even when many of us had lost hope.

We note that today the parties in the region continue to demonstrate the same united approach to the settlement in South Sudan as before, which is extremely important for further support to the peace process. Considering the South Sudanese people's sentiments and their increasing hopes for peace and welfare that the Ambassador of Sweden shared with us, we would like to urge all our Security Council colleagues to genuinely and practically continue to support the Sudanese peace process and the relevant efforts of regional organizations.

We also welcome the desire of the guarantors of the Agreement to assist with the implementation of the peace Agreement by providing national troops from the Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia to the Regional Protection Force. That represents a practical embodiment of the principle of African solutions to African problems, as well as an opportunity for effective cooperation between the United Nations, the Security Council and regional organizations. We are aware of the regular contacts between the General Chiefs of Staff of the IGAD countries on issues relating to the implementation of the Agreement, and we are ready to consider substantive proposals for the organization of the Regional Protection Force.

We have noted the first efforts of the South Sudanese to implement the revitalized Agreement, and we urge the country's politicians to demonstrate goodwill in ensuring full compliance with its provisions. Ultimately, the welfare of ordinary South Sudanese depends on them.

We realize that the timetables agreed on by the parties are fairly ambitious, but the fact is that only complete and comprehensive fulfilment of their commitments will help to foster mutual trust among the parties and spare them a recurrence of the mistakes made in the efforts to achieve a South Sudanese settlement in the past.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Chinese presidency for convening this timely meeting. We are also grateful to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Mr. Smaïl Chergui for their briefings.

The signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is a fundamental step towards peace in that country. It has enabled us to reach an encouraging moment that is reflected in fewer confrontations and the willingness of the parties to demonstrate their commitment to the political process. We want to highlight the presence of Mr. Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir standing together in Juba on 31 October at the celebration of the signing of the Agreement, and we must continue to build trust between the parties in order to achieve a lasting peace.

All of our efforts should be geared to the implementation of the Agreement, which will enable us to build a sustainable peace. That will not be possible without the active participation of women. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN-Women and the African Union in making a joint visit to the field and focusing specifically on the urgency of promoting the presence and participation of women in the implementation of the Agreement.

Throughout its almost two years as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Bolivia has emphasized the importance of building an inclusive peace process in South Sudan, and we see the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as also having been directed at that goal. With specific regard to women's participation, we stress that the Agreement provides that both in the pre-transition phase and during the transition itself, the Council of Ministers and other decision-making bodies and institutions must guarantee a quota of at least 35 per cent for women's representation. Progress has been made in that regard, but the parties will have to work even harder to attain at least that percentage.

We want to point out that the Secretary-General's message during the open debate on women and peace and security in October (see S/PV.8382) focused on the importance of inclusive peace processes and how women's active participation is directly linked to a more sustainable peace. There are various goals that should be prioritized during this stage and the next in order to promote the agenda on women and peace and security, the drive to achieve gender parity in field operations, the participation of women at all stages

of peace processes — in decision-making roles rather than merely limited to advisory functions — and the implementation of a peace and security approach based on gender, among other things. This is a good moment in South Sudan to promote the implementation of those objectives, along with the importance of creating a protective environment for women, combating sexual violence and developing transitional justice to ensure accountability, among other things, for which the establishment of a hybrid court under the leadership of the African Union will be crucial.

While we commend the progress made in the political arena, South Sudan continues to present major challenges on the security, humanitarian and economic fronts. Consolidating the political process is the only way to address the root causes of the conflict, and the Agreement is a promising step forward in that regard. We highlight the commitment that the Government and opposition have shown in signing it, and we encourage them to continue along that path. The proper implementation of the Agreement requires even greater commitment and stronger political will on the part of all of the parties involved. The ongoing collaboration of the Transitional Government and the opposition with the countries of the region and the United Nations should therefore be further strengthened at this stage.

Secondly — and we should emphasize this point — the cooperation of the international community is essential to mobilizing the political and financial resources needed to help implement the Agreement. Thirdly, it is very important to ensure that the Security Council stays united and works together with the African Union and IGAD, especially in restoring trust with the parties. We must therefore maintain a neutral and constructive position, and for that it is vital that we coordinate our actions with those of the wider region. It is also crucial that the parties ensure an optimal operating environment for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and for humanitarian workers, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, we reiterate our gratitude to the countries of the region for the leadership that they have demonstrated, which has enabled significant progress to be made in the political process. We also thank UNMISS, UN-Women and the African Union for raising this timely issue and for their commitment to the political process in South Sudan.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and for the important briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Mr. Smaïl Chergui following the joint African Union-United Nations visit to South Sudan in October.

Peru has been monitoring the peace and reconciliation process in South Sudan with high expectations and stresses the importance of the Council's continuing support to the people of South Sudan at this crucial time. We believe that the implementation of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan will be a complex process, requiring the sustained political commitment of the parties and the support of South Sudan's citizens, the international community and the relevant regional and subregional organizations.

In our view, confidence-building is of major importance, through concrete measures such as full compliance with the cessation of hostilities, unhindered access for humanitarian aid throughout the country, the release of political prisoners and full accountability for the atrocity crimes that have been committed. We underscore the need to improve the security situation following the completion of the various transitional agreements, as well as to form a transitional Government of national unity within the established time frame. We also emphasize the importance of concerted action by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations in reconfiguring the Regional Protection Force.

We want to highlight the fact that the visit by the senior officials who are here with us today focused on the empowerment and participation of women. Women have been the main victims of the conflict and their voices have not truly been heard. Now they are called on to play a key role in the peace process, as well as in security-sector reform. The evidence has shown that greater participation by women at every level of social and political life tends to produce more effective conflict resolution and consolidation of peace. Women provide perspectives on the future and on unity that are essential to building and sustaining peace. We emphasize in that regard the importance of complying with the 35 per cent quota established for women's representation throughout the pre-transition and transition phases in the Council of Ministers and other Government bodies and institutions where political decisions are made. That will undoubtedly enable more

effective progress to be made in tackling gender-based sexual violence. We consider it essential to develop the necessary capacities for ensuring that South Sudan's many victims get the comprehensive care they need.

We also believe it essential to guarantee access to justice. The recent convictions of 10 soldiers accused of murder and rape in 2016 must set a precedent whereby crimes and their perpetrators, direct or indirect, are duly investigated, prosecuted and punished. We hope that the peace process will enable a more effective response to the current humanitarian situation, particularly with regard to the acute food insecurity of almost 60 per cent of the population, which requires innovative mechanisms to address the serious situation, such as rapid joint responses that combine support for emergency food production and food assistance.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate how important it is that the Council remain united in providing the political support and follow-up required to continue making progress on the South Sudanese peace process, as well as working in close coordination with the African Union and IGAD, which have been fundamental to the progress that has been made.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix; African Union (AU) Commissioner Smaïl Chergui; and UN-Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for their comprehensive briefings on their joint visit to South Sudan.

The delegation of Kazakhstan commends them for their efforts to promote to promote the meaningful participation of women in the peace process and congratulates them on the successful first-ever joint trip to South Sudan. We also thank the Government of South Sudan for facilitating this visit. We welcome the increased collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union, as well as between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN-Women, aimed at enhancing the women and peace and security agenda as an important tool for conflict prevention and resolution in South Sudan.

The signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 12 September was a significant step towards peace in the country. We highly commend the concerted work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the AU and the United Nations, as well as the mediation efforts of Ethiopia, the Sudan and Uganda, which helped to secure the peace deal. This is a good example of the cherished notion of African solutions to African problems. We have high expectations that this historic agreement, signed after five years of fighting, will lay the foundations for durable peace and stability in the country and finally put an end to the human suffering.

However, it is deeply worrying that the humanitarian and human rights situation in South Sudan remains very difficult. Civilians, especially women and children, continue to bear the brunt of the crisis, suffering violence and displacement. Food insecurity is at a critical level. The hostilities between the Government and the opposition, as well as violations of the status-of-forces agreement, persist. The latter relate in particular to restrictions on movement, interference with the implementation of mandated tasks for the protection of civilians, and the monitoring and investigating of human rights.

We thus call on all parties in South Sudan to demonstrate genuine political will to implement the Agreement, stop the ongoing violence by bringing their forces under control and strictly comply with international humanitarian law. The parties need to implement a permanent cessation of hostilities and take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of the personnel of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The Council, in turn, needs to remain united in supporting the parties in South Sudan, UNMISS, IGAD and the AU in implementing the provisions of the Agreement. The international community should also make every effort to build trust and confidence between the parties and provide adequate and sustained funding for humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and economic development.

Women and young people play an important role in implementing the Agreement. It is therefore critical to build women's capacity, improve their access to the country's political leadership and, most of all, empower them to be engaged in early-warning, mediation and confidence-building processes among local populations.

True progress on women's empowerment in South Sudan, as in many other countries, requires a total social transformation involving the State, the judiciary and the educational system, grass-roots communities, religious leaders and civil society. It is evident that lack of access to high-quality, inclusive education is the

main obstacle to achieving women's empowerment in South Sudan. Efforts must also be made to strengthen women's economic security and promote their economic empowerment. Adequate and sustainable financing aimed at ensuring that UNMISS has sufficient gender expertise, authority and capacity is equally important.

To conclude, Kazakhstan pledges its unfailing support to efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in South Sudan and reaffirms the special contribution of women to making it a reality.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU); and Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their briefings.

I welcome the United Nations-African Union joint visit, which will be helpful in tackling African regional hotspot issues through United Nations-AU cooperation.

Progress has been made recently in terms of the implementation of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. China welcomes these developments. However, there is a still a long way to go in achieving durable peace and stability. The international community and the Security Council must fully recognize the complexity of the issues involving South Sudan and provide constructive help in tackling the difficulties it is currently facing.

I wish to stress the following two points.

First, it is important to fully respect South Sudan's leadership in managing its domestic affairs, while encouraging the South Sudanese Government to be more proactive in terms of initiatives. The international community should provide assistance that is in line with the needs of the Government and the people so as to avoid imposing a solution.

Secondly, it is important to continue to support the good offices of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The focus should be on ensuring that the parties effectively honour their commitments, achieve a complete cessation of violence, gradually implement the various provisions of the Agreement and facilitate confidence-building among political parties.

Women are a major force in the maintenance of international peace and security. China believes that the South Sudanese Government should play a major role in the implementation of the revitalized Agreement and supports it in its efforts to provide full protection for the rights of women and children.

The implementation of the revitalized Agreement will be a lengthy process. As a country ravaged by protracted conflict, South Sudan has seen setbacks in its economic and social development, leading to substandard living conditions in many parts of the country. In addition, the conflict has created large numbers of internally displaced persons. These issues, if not dealt with in a timely fashion, will affect peace and stability in the country. The international community must therefore ramp up its humanitarian assistance and economic support to the country, and, in conjunction with promoting the peace process, help the South Sudanese Government with its national reconstruction and enhance its development capacity. The focus should be on agriculture, energy, infrastructure, education and health.

At the same time, attention should be paid to the full participation of women and young people. China commends the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for the important contribution that it has made in maintaining peace and stability in South Sudan and supports the Mission in its efforts to continue to discharge its functions in line with the Council's Mandate, so as to provide support to the political process in the country.

China supports peace and development in South Sudan, and, under our commitment made at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, we recently provided RMB 300 million in aid to the South Sudanese Government and RMB 100 million in emergency humanitarian food assistance. In order to help improve medical care, in particular to enhance the level of service to women, we provided assistance in the construction of the Juba teaching hospital and the Rumbek women's hospital.

China will, as always, actively support and constructively participate in the peace process in South Sudan and play a constructive role in the realization of durable peace and sustainable development in the country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Mr. President, allow me to express our delight at reporting to you under your presidency for the second time. My delegation also would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Commissioner Chergui and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their presentations and their recent and timely visit to South Sudan.

My delegation would like also to thank the Permanent Representative of Sweden for leading the delegation of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to South Sudan recently.

As the Security Council knows, in Addis Ababa on 12 September, South Sudanese political leaders signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The long-awaited Agreement was the culmination of efforts by the leaders of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia, President Omer Al-Bashir of the Sudan and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who were its brokers. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan is grateful to them, the region, the African Union (AU), the United Nations and the international community.

While we appreciate the Security Council's concerns, we would like to remind members that we are at the pre-implementation stage of the Agreement. The role and participation of women are enshrined in the Agreement and will be enhanced when we implement it.

As the Council meets today to discuss issues regarding South Sudan, I want to point out that a time of peace in South Sudan has arrived. The people of South Sudan are excited that the Government and the opposition leaders have signed the revitalized Agreement. I would like to reassure the Council by recalling the statement that our President made on 15 September in which he pledged that the Government would implement the Agreement in good faith and appealed for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of South Sudan. We are indeed hopeful that the peace Agreement will unite the people of South Sudan as a result.

Since the peace celebration ceremony held on 31 October in Juba, which was attended by South Sudanese opposition leaders, regional and African leaders and representatives from the international community, confidence-building elements have already been visible to the people of South Sudan. Although it was behind schedule, the Parliament has ratified the revitalized peace Agreement, political detainees have been pardoned and freed and the National Pre-transitional Committee has been meeting in Juba and Khartoum. Most reassuring of all, however, is that several opposition delegations have visited Juba and been met by President Salva Kiir Mayardit over the past several days.

Those are all reassuring signs that most of the stakeholders are determined to make the peace Agreement work. Moreover, contrary to what most observers believed at the beginning, the national dialogue has been holding public discussions around the country in an environment of transparency and openness that many thought would not be possible a few months ago. What is most encouraging is that some opposition parties have been considering how best to join the national dialogue process, especially when the latter has been considering issues of the utmost concern to the opposition.

In conclusion, we would like to thank those who provided us with words of encouragement and comments during the process of implementation. We urge the Council to join the Secretary-General, the AU and IGAD in the endeavour of making sustainable peace a reality in South Sudan.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8404

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8404th meeting

Friday, 16 November 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme; and Ms. Rasha Jarhum, Founder and Director of the Peace Track Initiative Yemen.

Ms. Jarhum is joining us via video-teleconference from Ottawa.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to this Security Council briefing.

Yemen has long been referred to as the forgotten war. I am very grateful that this is no longer the case. Never has so much international attention and energy been given to this crisis, and rightly so. Yemen remains the largest humanitarian disaster in the world, as we will hear from Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley. The fight against famine is ongoing. Women, children and men are dying from preventable diseases, and the economy remains on the verge of collapse. Those are the reasons that urgent action is required from all of us.

Public opinion and leaders have called urgently to remove the prospect of famine. That is a clear example of the international conscience. For that reason, I personally encourage the Council to support the five requests presented by Mark Lowcock in this Chamber late October (see S/PV.8379). It provides a clear road map that we must all support.

The conflict continues and rages on. We see Al-Hudaydah as the centre of gravity of the war, which is why we deeply welcome recent reports of the reduction of violence on the Al-Hudaydah fronts, and we need it to last. I am extremely grateful to all leaders and others who have called for a cessation of hostilities. There must be no temptation to restart that battle. As a mediator in that conflict, I strongly believe that nothing should be allowed to impede the chance of dialogue and negotiation.

The Council has consistently called on all the parties to avoid any humanitarian catastrophe, and Secretary-General Guterres reminded us of our fears in that regard the other day. But the situation in Al-Hudaydah is fragile and unstable. We need to take urgent action. As members of the Council will recall, we made some progress over the summer to reach a negotiated handover of the port of Al-Hudaydah to the United Nations. I plan to visit Al-Hudaydah next week, along with my colleague Lise Grande, not least to revisit a United Nations supervisory role for the port and to draw attention to the continued need for a pause.

I am encouraged by the recent calls from all parties, the Government of Yemen in particular, as well as Ansar Allah, in addition to the coalition, for the United Nations to step forward at this time on this issue. Let us build on that, rather than retreat.

With increased international attention has come a renewed commitment from the Yemeni parties to working on a political solution. I welcome President Hadi Mansour's announcement of his desire to move swiftly to a political solution, and I know from my contacts in Sana'a that Ansar Allah is also committed to that. With that in mind, I intend to reconvene the parties shortly and to do so in Sweden. In that regard, I thank the Swedish Government through the representative of Sweden here, Ambassador Skoog, for its offer to host those consultations.

I believe that we are close to resolving the preparatory issues that will allow us to make that happen. I am grateful to the coalition for agreeing to our proposed logistical arrangements, and to the coalition and Oman for their agreement to facilitate the medical evacuation of some injured Yemenis out of Sana'a.

This is a crucial moment for Yemen. I have received firm assurances from the leadership of the Yemeni parties — the Government of Yemen first, and then Ansar Allah — that they are committed to attending

those consultations. I believe that they are genuine, and I expect them to continue in that way and appear for those consultations, and indeed, so do the Yemeni people, who are desperate for a political solution to a war in which they are the main victims.

I have spent the last two months seeking support from the parties for an updated version of the framework for negotiations, the elements of which I orally briefed members of the Council on 18 June. The framework is based upon the three references, including resolution 2216 (2015), as wll as the progress made particularly in Kuwait. I reiterate again, as I have done in previous meetings of the Council, our gratitude to the Government of Kuwait for hosting those talks in 2016.

After carefully listening to the parties over the last few months, I am confident that the framework is in line with both the requirements of the Council and the new realities of the conflict in Yemen. The framework, however, is my vision. But its ideas are not mine alone. Every conversation and every negotiation that has taken place before has been the basis for that document. I have, as those present would imagine, shared it with the parties for their views and ultimately, I hope, for their acceptance, just as a basis for negotiation and not to negotiate the text itself, which will be the matter for which we will bring the parties together in the coming weeks and months. When the parties have had the opportunity to brief me on their views on the framework, I would like to put it in front of the Council and seek its endorsement, so that we can use it as a basis for upcoming consultations on substance and agree on a road map towards a transitional agreement, ideally in the next round of consultations.

The framework establishes the principles and parameters for United Nations-led, inclusive Yemeni negotiations to end the war, resolve the conflict and start a political transition process. It includes a set of interim security and political arrangements, including mechanisms, sequencing and guarantees for implementation. It is a very broad-brush document, as it is intended only as a basis for detailed negotiation. However, I believe that the arrangements outlined and referred to will allow for an end to the fighting inside Yemen, the return of Yemen's friendly relations with neighbouring States and the restoring of State institutions.

I believe that the framework reflects the resolutions of the Council in fact and in words and in no way derogates from them. My task is to shape a way towards a principled compromise that allows the people of Yemen to live again in peace. It sets out a political solution that is available and, as I have said, is there to be adopted if we are to have the fortune to move forward with it.

A mediator's principal task is to bring the parties together to resolve their differences through dialogue and compromise rather than combat and conflict. That is what I hope we will see soon as we move forward. We are doing all that we can to achieve those goals but, as I said in the Chamber in April, the events of war can always take peace off the table (see S/PV.8235). We must not let that happen now.

We are working very hard to finalize the logistical arrangements. I will go to Sana'a next week for that purpose. I will meet the leader of Ansar Allah, Abdulmalik al-Houthi, with whom I have had detailed discussions in previous months about the need for engagement, consultations and, ultimately, negotiations. It will be useful to me to again hear his leadership on such matters. I will also be happy to travel with the delegation to the consultations, if needed.

For a political settlement to be sustainable, it must be inclusive. It is a requirement of the resolutions concerning this conflict. It must enjoy the support of the Yemeni people. I am fortunate to have the support of the Yemeni women's technical advisory group, which not only came with us to Geneva but also is providing specific ideas on tactics and strategies as we move forward towards consultations. We are also looking at using technology to strengthen inclusivity and provide an interactive platform for the voices that cannot travel but remain in Yemen to be heard as we gather the parties around the table. In the twenty-first century, in our view, physical presence is not the only way to strengthen inclusion.

The southern question is always on our minds. We are currently enjoying a period of calm but the threat of violence, destabilization and instability is ever present. I have spent a great deal of time listening to southern groups and exploring ways to address their concerns. Ultimately, the just resolution of the southern issue should be achieved, in my view, during the transitional period. It should meet the legitimate aspirations of the people of Yemen and ensure that they enjoy the benefits of good governance. That almost goes without saying, but I think that it is important to record that objective

here. Southern actors will clearly have a crucial role in safeguarding the outcomes of the peace process on which we are now working, and it is vital to secure their buy-in. However, it is my responsibility to alert the Security Council that there is unfinished business in the south of Yemen.

I would like to take the opportunity to announce to the members of the Council that we are about to conclude — and I had hoped to announce such a conclusion — an agreement between the parties on the exchange of prisoners and detainees. I think that it would and may still be the first signed agreement between the parties to the conflict. We have made great progress. President Hadi Mansour was the first to urge us to focus on that. I also had the support of Abdulmalik al-Houthi when I first met him. I welcome the commitment of all parties that have engaged in good faith — the coalition, the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah. It is an important humanitarian gesture and a timely message of hope to the Yemeni people. As I said, I had hoped that we would have been able to announce the formalization of that agreement today. However, I am sure that it will happen in the coming days.

I strongly believe that the parties need to get together without conditions, also under our auspices, to jointly address the dire economic situation in Yemen, including the rapid deterioration of the Yemeni rial — a key contributing aspect to famine. It is useful to note and important to give credit to the Government of Yemen for the fact that the depreciation of the rial, which was so alarming in past weeks, seems to have flattened out. I think that it is important to note that extremely significant measure of the stress in Yemen. That should not be a matter subject to political consideration when the victims are the Yemeni people. Indeed, that is not a confidence-building measure. It is a moral responsibility and the obligation of the parties to the Yemeni people. I hope, and have been planning for some time, soon to convene a meeting of the Central Bank of Yemen, to be facilitated by the International Monetary Fund, in order to agree on an action plan that would allow the Central Bank of Yemen to discharge its responsibilities across the country and for all people of Yemen.

Finally, we must seize such positive international momentum on Yemen. The attention to Yemen is a great asset, as is the unity of the Council. I strongly believe that this is an opportunity at a crucial moment to pursue a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement to the conflict. Yemen can indeed no longer be referred to as a forgotten war. I would ask the Council to consider the fact that all our efforts should be directed towards at least two issues. First is the humanitarian priority, to which, I am sure, Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley will refer shortly. That is the most important priority for the people of Yemen. And, secondly, let us hope that there will be no acts or omissions that prevent the convening of the parties for consultations in Sweden in the coming weeks. It is an opportunity that has been long awaited by the people of Yemen and that the Council has long asked of the parties. I think that we are almost there. I do not know if we will succeed and what the odds are. We need to focus on ensuring that nothing disrupts the path to that meeting.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: On 23 October, I warned the Security Council that a grave economic crisis and escalating conflict had pushed Yemen closer to famine than ever before (see S/PV.8379).

Shortly after that briefing, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network released a new alert. The Early Warning Systems Network, which is supported by the United States, is one of the leading providers of early warning and analysis on acute food insecurity. According to the Network, "Yemen faces the largest food security emergency in the world, and the worsening humanitarian outlook requires urgent action to reduce the likelihood of significant loss of life".

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network characterizes the food security situation in Yemen as facing "a catastrophic deterioration" and warns that many of the millions of the severely food-insecure people in the country "face food consumption gaps large enough to lead to increases in human mortality".

So is it a famine? With respect, I fear that that is the wrong question. A very painful lesson learned from the two famines declared this century — in Somalia in 2011 and in South Sudan in 2017 — is the fact that most fatalities occur before famine is declared. So to be clear, I am not saying that widespread famine has already taken hold in Yemen, but that is what we are trying to prevent. It is abundantly clear that Yemen is already facing mass hunger and severe food insecurity.

We are fortunate to have David Beasley here today. He will describe the food security situation in more detail and tell us about his visit to the country earlier this week. In my assessment, Yemen has so far avoided famine for just two reasons.

First, the United Nations and humanitarian agencies are implementing the largest aid operation in the world, reaching nearly 8 million Yemenis across the country every month. Secondly, Member States and other key stakeholders have taken action when the risk of famine has intensified in the past, for example by working together to lift the temporary blockade this time last year and by providing generous, flexible, large-scale funding early this year. As I emphasized in my last briefing, we urgently need the Council to take action again now. That is why I sought the Council's support on five key requests, which, if they are fully implemented, would save the lives of millions of Yemenis, sparing them from an entirely avoidable catastrophe. So today I would like to update the Council on where we stand with those five actions.

My first request was for a cessation of hostilities to be implemented in and around the infrastructure and facilities on which the aid operation and commercial importers rely. Many Council members made similar requests during the 23 October meeting and after that, and the Secretary-General reinforced that position in his statement of 2 November. What in fact happened was that violence escalated on several fronts immediately after my last briefing. Since 30 October, United Nations sources have observed nearly 800 separate incidents of shelling, armed clashes or air strikes across Yemen. Some of the fiercest fighting has been in Al-Hudaydah, which is where most of the crucial infrastructure needing protection actually is. Those incidents too often have devastating consequences for civilians. To cite just one recent incident, a bus carrying civilians fleeing conflict in Al-Hudaydah came under attack on Tuesday, killing seven people.

Critical civilian infrastructure has not been spared either. Last Sunday, patients — some of whom were still connected to medical devices — reportedly fled Al-Hudaydah's largest public hospital into the street amidst large explosions. Several days later, the same hospital was damaged by shrapnel, and then again by shelling yesterday. A second hospital was damaged after becoming caught up in the crossfire as front lines shifted around the city. Fighters also took up positions inside that hospital and on its roof, placing the entire facility at grave risk. The impact of violence in Al-Hudaydah has compounded the chaos and hardships facing people who were already in desperate straits. Needs are enormous; perhaps 30 per cent of people still in the city are barely surviving, including about a quarter of children who are malnourished. As the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Lise Grande, recently noted, the most vulnerable people in the whole country are sitting there in Al-Hudaydah. These are the poorest of the poor.

The fighting has also had an impact on humanitarian operations. Some programmes have been scaled back in Al-Hudaydah and the staff overseeing them have left — I hope only temporarily. Other important emergency programmes remain in place, and agencies are restocking supplies inside Al-Hudaydah in an attempt to ensure that critical humanitarian operations can continue if the situation gets worse.

So, for all the reasons Martin Griffiths has just cited and those I have just given to the Council, it remains urgent, as Martin has said, for the parties to agree a cessation of hostilities. We both issued statements reiterating that earlier this week. In the past two days, we have seen a welcome de-escalation and what appears to be at least a pause in the fighting in Al-Hudaydah, but what we need to know is that this lull is going to be sustained. Let me repeat again that, as we have previously said and as Martin touched on, the United Nations is ready to play an enhanced role in ensuring the appropriate use of key facilities around Al-Hudaydah, such as the port.

The second area for which I sought the support of the Council is to facilitate and protect the supply of food and other essential goods across the country. As members know, Yemen imports nearly all of its food, fuel and medicine. Commercial food imports in October through the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef — where most of the food enters the country — fell by more than 50 per cent as compared to September. Only 17 ships discharged cargo in those ports in October — the second-lowest monthly figure ever recorded. To avoid famine, it is essential to keep all ports functioning and to remove obstacles to imports or the domestic distribution of essential goods. I therefore welcome the Government of Yemen's decision this week to suspend Cabinet Decree 75 for food imports. Experts had warned that the immediate implementation of that Decree could lead to worse food shortages and higher prices. But although the Government has suspended

Decree 75 for food, it remains in place for fuel, which is critical to pumping drinking water, maintaining sanitation systems and running hospital generators.

Since the enforcement of Decree 75 for fuel began last month, the coalition has, at the request of the Government of Yemen, denied entry to four commercial vessels carrying nearly 53,000 tons of fuel. That is equivalent to more than 40 per cent of average fuel imports in any given month since the temporary blockade was lifted about a year ago. To protect the food supply and avoid famine, parties to the conflict must also avoid damaging or cutting off access to supporting infrastructure. The main eastern road from Al-Hudaydah to Sana'a remains closed due to insecurity, forcing traders and humanitarian partners to reroute shipments, which costs more money and more time. Several humanitarian sites are in areas in Al-Hudaydah that have recently changed hands. They include the Red Sea Mills, which contain enough grain to feed more than 3 million people for a month. I understand that talks are proceeding on options to ensure that those critical supplies can now reach the people who need them.

My third request was for the provision of support for the Yemeni economy by injecting foreign exchange and paying salaries and pensions. Those measures will protect against famine by boosting people's ability to purchase food and other essential goods and by supporting traders in keeping commercial imports flowing. In October, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia deposited $200 million in the Central Bank of Yemen to strengthen the Yemeni rial. That welcome move has helped to bring the exchange rate down from a peak of about 800 rial to the United States dollar in early October, to about 670 rial to the dollar today. It has also helped to finance imports of food and other essential commodities. Some reports also indicate that that deposit may be helping to lower food prices slightly. Those are important improvements.

At the same time, we must recall that the exchange rate before the conflict escalated four years ago was 215 rial to the dollar, so it still costs more than three times as many rials to buy a dollar than it did before the conflict escalated. In the past year alone, the rial has lost nearly 50 per cent of its value. It is also important to note that applications to access Central Bank credit against the Saudi deposit have exceeded the available funds — a sign that traders are eager to maintain the flow of essential imports if they have access to adequate capital. Those developments demonstrate that foreign exchange injections are enormously effective in this environment. We need a continuing, large-scale flow of foreign exchange into the market to finance adequate levels of imports and to support the currency at a level that will make food and other commodity prices affordable.

Regarding salary payments, I welcomed the news in my last briefing that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would provide $70 million to cover allowances for 135,000 teachers. We see that as a best practice, and discussions with potential donors on replicating it for health and sanitation workers, as well as for pensioners, are at an advanced stage. Several weeks ago, the Houthi authorities in Sana'a also released some of the backlog in civil servant salaries. We hope that will be a first step towards the resumption of regular salary payments across the country.

My fourth request was for an increase funding and support to the aid operation. This year, we are extremely grateful to all our donors for providing $2.3 billion so far to the 2018 United Nations coordinated humanitarian response plan. That is nearly 80 per cent of the requirements we estimated at the beginning of the year. Given developments over the past few months, we are now discussing additional funding for this year with donors. I hope decisions on that will be taken by the relevant donors very soon. Given the increase in needs, as a result of the intensified fighting and the further recent collapse of the economy, I can say that next year's response plan will be substantially larger. I will announce the precise amount shortly. The Secretary-General plans to convene a high-level conference on Yemen with a focus on the 2019 humanitarian response plan in February.

My fifth request called on all belligerents to work with the Special Envoy to end the conflict, and I will not repeat Martin's comprehensive account of where the process stands. I echo his calls to move quickly towards confidence-building measures and consultations, and from there to resume full negotiations. Council members have just heard Martin confirm his support for my five requests. I want to emphasize that those five requests need to be seen as a package. Substantial new action is needed on all of them if massive loss of life in a terrible famine is to be avoided. I am therefore again seeking Council members' individual and collective support — both practical and political — on those five areas.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beasley.

Mr. Beasley: I thank you, Sir, for convening this briefing on Yemen. It is good to be with my two colleagues and friends, whom I highly respect.

I know that when appearing in this hallowed Chamber, one is expected to speak in measured tones and that points are to be made with caution. In diplomacy, often that is the best and smoothest way, but today I am not sure that is possible. I have just come from three days on the ground in Yemen, and soft words will not do justice to what is happening to the children, mothers, fathers and families in that country. What I have seen this week in Yemen is the stuff of nightmares, horror, deprivation and misery. That country of some 28 to 29 million people has been suffering for years, but now, as some would say, it is on the brink of catastrophe. But it is not on the brink of catastrophe — it is actually a catastrophe, and each and everyone of us has our own selves to blame. The question is: What are we going to do about it?

The conditions that everyday Yemenis endure are presently only because of war. They would not exist at all if stubborn men would just sit down and talk instead of fighting. Yemen is perhaps the prime example of why the Council went on record in May recognizing the link between conflict and hunger. Let me put it in true human terms, because Council members will hear a lot about numbers today and tomorrow.

But that is just not about numbers; it is about real people with names, like little Mohamed, whom I saw just two days ago in a hospital in Sana'a. That little eight-month old boy's parents had driven 300 kilometres to the only hospital that had some support; they were trying to save their little boy's life. He suffered from acute malnutrition and weighed just 3.3 kilograms, which is about one-third of what a child of that age should weigh. Little Mohamed was not much more than skin and bones. Council members have seen such pictures in the news. Those are not isolated incidents; they are the reality of children throughout the country.

I said that he was not much more than skin and bones, because the sad part is that little Mohamed died yesterday. It is hard to walk through a hospital. In room after room, one sees these little children dying before ones very eyes. I remember one little child whose feet were sticking out of the blanket. As a father, I thought it was cute and I went to tickle one little foot, hoping for a smile. But there was no smile. It was like tickling a ghost. There are no smiles, no laughter; the crying is weak; they are sick, hungry and dying. The chief doctor at the hospital told me they are getting about 50 cases a day of severely malnourished children. They only have room for 20. When I asked what they do about the other 30, he answered that they send them home to die. Four years ago, the hospital did not even have an area for malnourished children.

I will focus this briefing on three main elements: first, the economic impact of the political and military crisis; secondly, the deteriorating food security situation; and thirdly, what the United Nations, the World Food Programme and other actors must to do get Yemen on its feet.

First, Yemen is in economic collapse. The people of Yemen have endured war for years, but what is dramatically changing the situation on the ground today is economic collapse. The value of the Yemeni rial has dropped by a staggering 235 per cent since January 2015 — from 215 rial to the United States dollar to 720, give or take. Imagine what that does to a household — two-thirds of its purchasing power is just gone. In many cases, the price of simple, basic food staples has doubled in the past eight months. That is happening while household incomes are going in the other direction. Eight million livelihoods have disappeared; 1.2 million civil servants are without pay or have had little financial support in the past few years. Those 1.2 million support households of about 8 million people out of the entire population of 29 million.

There are massive currency problems, with no incomes or access to cash. For a country that is dependent on imports for the basic needs of life, that is a disaster. Other countries that have experienced hyperinflation, such as South Sudan and Zimbabwe, can at least grow their own food, but Yemen cannot. It relies on imports. That is the primary reason why hunger is on a dramatic increase.

Second is the deteriorating food security. Based on our latest assessment, we know for a fact that it is extremely dire. Of 28 million Yemenis, we believe that as many as 18 million are food insecure, but as many as or more than 12 million Yemenis — almost half of the entire country — are just one step away from famine. They are on the brink of starvation; they do not know

when their next meal is coming from. As Mark said, once you declare famine it is way too late.

Those are children and adults dying every day. They may not be yet classified as dying of famine, but we are marching towards disaster. The number has doubled in the past year and a half, and it is getting worse, largely because of the currency decline. Our monitoring systems show that there are 3.6 million more hungry people in Yemen than there were just three months ago. In the past month alone, the number of hungry people has risen by 1.6 million. I believe we do not need to wait for formal declarations about famine or even a full report to act.

We must act now. I believe that because of what I saw with my very own eyes and heard this past week. Children are already dying across the country. Right now, the World Food Programme is helping about 8 million people a month in Yemen. We are especially thankful for the generosity of our donors, the hard work of about 500 staff members who put their lives on the line every single day in that country, 30 cooperating partner agencies and the support of other United Nations agencies as well.

The World Food Programme currently has enough food cereals in the country for two months of assistance to help about 6.8 million people. As of early November, we have several food shipments en route to various ports in the country. We have even started to use the port of Salalah, in neighbouring Oman, as a supplementary route. We are anticipating any potential catastrophic situation at any port to assure that we have alternatives in place to minimize the impact of what is already a dire situation. We are looking at alternative ports in Saudi Arabia, as well as in Oman, as I mentioned, so that the pipeline will not be broken should there be a devastation of the port in Al-Hudaydah. Hostilities must stop.

Not only did I go to Aden and Sana'a, but I also went to Al-Hudaydah. Let me tell the Council about visiting Al-Hudaydah. What normally is a three- or four-hour simple, nice, beautiful drive is not so beautiful and nice any more. It is double that amount of time going through checkpoint after checkpoint; bridges have been bombed and, whatever the case may be, because of the war front we are having to move and go different routes. It is quite a chore. Lise Grande and I went together.

Al-Hudaydah is like a ghost town. Representatives will have seen those kind of movies where it is empty. One sees a dog walking here or there, and that is about the extent of it. The way we are doing food distribution right now is to give people enough for a whole month so we minimize their being on the streets, because people do not want to walk out on the streets because they are afraid they will get killed. One cannot imagine the number of people coming up to me and wanting to hug me and say "Thank you for being here". But then they would say, "Please do not leave". Because while we were there, there was no fighting. "Please do not leave. Stay a few days. Give us peace. Give us some hope." I said that I had to leave so that I could help tell the world how bad it really is and that they deserve better than this.

My third point concerns the humanitarian and economic intervention is required. I agree with absolutely everything that Mark was talking about. This is not just one element. It is a package. We must work together, but let me clear that starvation is on the horizon unless circumstances change, and change immediately. The war has taken its toll over four years, but the economic crisis will accelerate that damage in a just a matter of months. We must combine humanitarian assistance with an all-out effort to restore the Yemeni economy. Let me be crystal clear — humanitarian assistance alone cannot reverse the dire situation. We need a twin-track approach.

First, we need to put more hard currency into the Yemeni economy and the hands of the Yemeni people, as Mark referred to. The rial needs to be stabilized to at least a 450-to-$1 ratio so people are able to buy essential things again and to get the economy rolling again. This would require a cash injection of approximately $200 million per month.

Secondly, we need to scale up our assistance in order to help 12 million people per month. As I said earlier, we are helping about 8 million. We need to scale up to approximately 12 million, give or take 1 or 2 million. That would require about $150 million to $160 million a month just for food and assistance, versus the approximately $100 million a month that we are spending at the World Food Programme. If we are able to raise the funds of $150 million to $160 million a month just for the food assistance alone, we hope and believe that about $50 million of that could be used as cash-based assistance for the most food-insecure people, and that cash-based assistance would not only save lives, but would also help inject much-needed liquidity into the economy. We work with store owners, family-

owned businesses to help them provide the liquidity to stimulate the economy in these communities and to get that engine going again, which is critical for the stability of this country.

But as we begin this work, the warring parties must guarantee access, especially in and out of Al-Hudaydah port. If Al-Hudaydah port shuts down without alternatives, it will be a devastation beyond our furthest imagination. Little boys and little girls will die. We cannot truly meet the need unless we have much more improved access throughout the country — for logistics corridors, ports and the ability to monitor and assess. We need expedited clearances for our shipments, visas, equipment requests and personnel.

Yemen is on the brink so, together, we must act. The international community must use all its power to stop this war and rescue the Yemen economy and the Yemeni people. Humanitarian organizations, like World Food Programme, must get the resources and the access they need to save the lives of innocent children and families. Otherwise, at the World Food Programme and other humanitarian agencies, we will be in the position of deciding which children eat and which children do not eat, which children live and which children die. How would anyone in this Chamber like that job?

Every child deserves better. The words "heartbreaking" and "tragic" do not do the situation in Yemen justice. All of humankind should be ashamed of what is happening in that country. With all the wealth in the world today, all the intellectual knowledge, and all the technology the world has today, there should not be a single child going to bed hungry in Yemen, much less anywhere else. It is long, oh so very long, past the time to stop it.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Beasley for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Jarhum.

Ms. Jarhum: I thank the Council for providing me with the opportunity to brief the Council on behalf of the Peace Track Initiative and the Women's Solidarity Network — a coalition of 250 Yemeni women and women-led organizations working on the protection of women and peacebuilding in Yemen.

Yemen has been spiralling into a devastating war for over four years. In our country, there is a bleeding wound in every home and a story of continuing loss and despair. Dying children scream "Do not bury me!" as the conflict rages, but their cries go unnoticed. The use of explosive weapons by the forces affiliated with the internationally recognized Government and its allies in the Arab coalition, as well as the Houthis, has resulted in many civilian casualties. The warring parties continue to disregard international humanitarian law with virtual impunity in Al-Hudaydah, Taiz and across the country. Meanwhile, actors directly or indirectly involved in the conflict are disregarding the main principles of the Arms Trade Treaty. The extensive use of landmines by the Houthis has resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries and is a direct impediment to accessing aid. Future generations will pay the price.

As we prepare for the upcoming International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I would like to remind the Council that Yemeni women were already suffering from legal, institutional and social violence. As a result, they now bear the burden of the multidimensional insecurities of this war. Documented cases of gender-based violence, including rape, rose by 70 per cent in the first five months of the war. Child marriages increased by 66 per cent.

Women in the besieged city of Taiz spend long hours walking through rough terrain or traversing areas controlled by armed groups, where they are repeatedly harassed. They do that to provide their families with basic living necessities and to protect their men from forced recruitment, abduction, detention and torture. Young women, including Sana'a University students, have been subjected to violent repression by Houthi armed groups, including by women thugs known as Al-Zaynabiyat. Some women have been beaten, electrocuted, arrested and released only on the condition that they refrain from engaging in activism. Others have had male family members detained on their behalf.

We have supported many women human rights defenders in providing their safe exit to neighbouring countries, assisting in filing for asylum and seeking resettlement in third countries. Unfortunately, none of those cases have resulted in resettlement. Although the Yemen refugee crisis does not in numbers amount to the Syrian one, it is still a problem affecting hundreds of thousands of Yemenis. Policies such as the European Union Dublin Regulation, the United States executive order to ban citizens from seven nations, including Yemen, from entering the United States, and the recent Saudi policies to deport Yemenis have all contributed to separating families.

On the situation in the south of the country, we echo the voices of the southern Yemeni women on the importance of reaching a just solution to the southern cause and realizing their right to self-determination. Today, after three decades of strife, southern grievances have still not been addressed. We have also seen the total exclusion of southerners and their cause from the current peace framework and negotiations, usually justified by the limitations of resolution 2216 (2015), which has been interpreted to limit negotiations to two sides.

We as women have the highest stake in peace. Members of the Women's Solidarity Network work relentlessly to end the bloody conflict over water and land resources, evacuate schools from armed groups and restore the rights of our sons and daughters to education, and we risk our lives on a daily basis to rescue families trapped in conflict zones. Many members of the Network play a leading role in alleviating the suffering of citizens by conducting relief projects and negotiating the opening of humanitarian corridors.

We are particularly proud to share the news that the Mothers of Abductees Association, which regularly demonstrates and calls for the release of its members' sons while enduring risks and abuse, was able to secure the release 336 detainees. That is compared to zero detainees released through the United Nations-sponsored process. Other members of the Women's Solidarity Network are actively working to stop the recruitment of children as combatants. They do so despite the limited means to help those children. Meanwhile, the United Nations has, since 2016, suspended its own disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes targeting children, citing security concerns and awaiting a political solution.

The comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, organized under the auspices of the United Nations and supported by the Council, was an important milestone in the country's history. Yemeni women participated effectively to produce a landmark framework and a charter for their rights and freedoms. That was later reflected in the draft constitution of 2015 and should remain fundamental in moving forward with any political resolution in Yemen.

Although women continue to play a leading role in peacebuilding, and despite presidential statement S/PRST/2017/7 of 2017, explicitly calling for the meaningful inclusion of women, women are still largely excluded from the peace negotiation process. We attribute that to the patriarchal philosophy of peace mediation, which rewards violence by granting space at the negotiation table only to holders of weapons, rather than the real peacemakers.

We welcome the recent efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to support the engagement of women, starting with the expansion of his gender team and the establishment of the women's technical advisory group. However, we emphasize that women's engagement must not be restricted to an advisory role in the mediation efforts. Women must be meaningfully represented, present at the table and engaged in decision-making.

We join the many voices calling for a ceasefire and the resumption of the peace process. We affirm that there can be no just and sustainable peace without an inclusive process. As the Council moves forward in its discussions, resolutions or other actions, we strongly urge it to adopt the following recommendations.

On security measures, it should demand an immediate ceasefire, starting by ending the air bombardments led by the internationally recognized Government and its allies in the Arab coalition and pursue confidence-building measures towards restoring State institutions. It should call for the disarmament of all outlawed armed groups, demand the relocation of military camps and depots outside of cities and request the revival of the local security apparatus.

It should enforce a ban on the Houthis' use of landmines, urge them to submit a landmine map, request the commencement of demining operations and call for support for landmine victims. It must call for the prevention of the transfer and use of arms in Yemen. It should demand the lifting of the restrictions on ports and the normalization of air traffic in all governorates, allowing commercial aviation to operate. It should enforce a ban on child recruitment and request the immediate revival of the mobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes for child combatants. It should call for the release of all arbitrarily detained and forcefully disappeared persons, particularly civilians, politicians, journalists, activists and members of the Baha'i minority, and demand an end to the issuance of the death penalty.

It should send peacekeepers to Yemen from neutral States that have not engaged in any way in the conflict in Yemen. It must call for immediate action to address the

logistical challenges preventing the peace negotiations from taking place, and urge a comprehensive and inclusive process that is guided by the implementation mechanism and the National Dialogue Conference. It should adopt all papers submitted during the National Dialogue Conference, including the final document and visions submitted by all groups to inform the framework for a political solution in Yemen. It must demand the establishment of an international fund for the reconstruction of Yemen in a transparent manner, to be co-financed by the Arab coalition countries and the international community. It should enact measures to support economic stability, reconstruction and the restoration of social services, while urging the establishment of anti-corruption mechanisms.

It must recognize the rights of southerners through a just solution that speaks to the demands of the southern people. It should demand a local ceasefire in Taiz governorate and support our five-point initiative to protect civilians in Al-Hudaydah. It must demand the initiation of resettlement programmes and asylum facilities to address the situation of Yemenis abroad. It should request a gender audit of ongoing relief operations, demand a solution for humanitarian diversion and reiterate the importance of integrating gender issues into the humanitarian response plans. It should demand the establishment of a mechanism to hold perpetrators accountable within a wider context of transitional justice and reparations, and impose individual targeted sanctions against warlords and those who obstruct the peace process. It should request that the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) include gender expertise and gender-responsive reporting mechanisms.

On strengthening the engagement of women policymakers, the Council should recognize the priorities of women identified in the national agenda for women and peace and security, submitted in 2016, and call on the Government to report on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It should refer explicitly to resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, as well as subsequent resolutions, clearly demand no less than 30 per cent participation by women in delegations and all related ceasefire and peace processes, and impose vacant seats if women are not included.

It should mandate an independent women's delegation at the peace negotiation table. It should urge the Special Envoy to ensure that women have equal representation in the peace consultations process and address the demands that we sent to him in our letter of March 2018. It should call for the establishment of a mechanism to hear the voices of rural women, as well as women victims and survivors of war, ensuring that their priorities are integrated into the negotiation process and the political solution. It should demand support for women peacemakers and urge the allocation of funding directly and flexibly to grass-roots women, activists and women's movements in order to support their efforts. It must call for the establishment of a clear mechanism to protect women and women human rights defenders and address their integrated protection needs, including their physical, psychological, digital and collective security.

We hope that those recommendations will be adopted and that they will make a significant contribution to ending the conflict in Yemen. The lack of action on those recommendations is a moral failure that contributes to the continued suffering of more than 27 million Yemenis.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Jarhum for her briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank our four briefers very much. I do not think that I have ever heard a more powerful set of briefings and pleas in the Security Council than those we heard from today. I think that their words and requests will reverberate around the Council. So far, the Council has been very united in its support of the United Nations work in Yemen, and we expect that to continue. I think, as well, that there is obviously a very clear joint partnership among the three United Nations Heads, which is also very important. If there is any light to be found in this awful crisis, it lies in their willingness to speak out and work really closely with one another. Their dedication and that of their teams and civil society to help the people of Yemen must be one of the things that the members of the Council have at the forefront of their minds.

As they described, it is a truly appalling situation on the ground. The severity of the humanitarian catastrophe cannot be overstated. Regardless of the hard work that is needed to redouble efforts in response to the humanitarian need — and we take into account everything that was just said about the commercial needs in order to keep Yemen functioning — it is also

clear that we, and they, will not succeed without an equal effort and commitment on the political track. It bears repeating once again that only a political solution will actually bring this dreadful conflict to an end. We heard about some small positive steps from Martin Griffiths today, in particular concerning the Central Bank and the exchange of prisoners. We heard some good news concerning the United Nations conference next year. I think that that is very important. But we have to bear in mind the very sobering descriptions that David Beasley gave us of what life is like for ordinary people, including children.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we very much agree with what the Special Envoy said about bringing the parties together without preconditions. We need the words that we heard to be translated into concrete action. We need the parties to engage with the Special Envoy to take part in the consultations that Martin is setting up and engage constructively so that ultimately he can pave the way forward towards the resumption of formal negotiations. What the Special Envoy said about bringing his framework back to the Council is very welcome and important. I am sure that all members of the Council will want to express their support for all three of his strands of work for the United Nations, in particular for the political track. It is obviously vital that talks are inclusive and women are properly included. The women's technical advisory service is a very good step in that direction. It is good that he is searching for modern ways to put that into practice. The messages from Rasha Jarhum have been incredibly important today, and I thank her for taking the time to come and explain to the Council how it looks from the perspective of the citizens of Yemen.

My Foreign Secretary was in the region earlier this week because, like Martin and everyone else here, we believe that there is a window of opportunity to tackle this man-made crisis in Yemen. I want to emphasize the "man-made" aspect by saying that men can resolve what they have created. I therefore believe that that is another reason for all possible efforts to be put into the political track. David Beasley exhorted us to act now. I do not think that there is anyone who can have failed to have been moved by what David and Rasha told us. Jeremy Hunt, my Foreign Secretary, has announced that we will work with Security Council partners. Mark Lowcock provided us with a very important state of play with regard to his five asks. Speaking for the United Kingdom, we support all of them. Secretary Hunt has therefore asked me to say that, as penholder, we will provide the text of a draft resolution to partners on the Security Council on Monday, with the intention of including Mark's five asks, which all members have endorsed. I think that it is a very important point, to include all of Mark's five asks into practice.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme; and Ms. Rasha Jarhum, Founder and Director of the Peace Track Initiative in Yemen, for their briefings on the recent developments in Yemen.

In my statement I will underscore two key issues: developments in the political and security situation and developments in the humanitarian and economic situation.

With regard to the political and security developments, we listened carefully to the briefing by Mr. Griffiths, who spoke of positive indicators towards the revitalization of the political track to address the Yemeni crisis. He said that perhaps an agreement will soon be reached between the Government and the Houthis to release prisoners and detainees, a step which we welcome. It would be an important step for confidence-building among the Yemeni parties. In that regard, we welcome the announcement about the upcoming resumption of political consultations in Stockholm. We thank the Kingdom of Sweden for hosting those consultations. At the same time, we hope that all Yemeni parties will commit to participating in good faith and without any preconditions in that round of consultations to allay fears of a repetition of the consultations in Geneva last September. The Security Council and the international community, in particular the coalition States, all supported Geneva consultations, and those States ceased their military operations at that time to facilitate the unhindered participation of Houthis. Unfortunately, the Houthis failed to participate in the consultations, which left negative consequences and deepened the catastrophic crisis at the humanitarian, economic and political levels.

The announcement of the upcoming round of consultations to be held in Stockholm resulted from the interest of the coalition States in supporting the political process with a view to ensuring Yemen's

security, stability, unity and sovereignty. That comes despite major security challenges confronting certain coalition States by the Houthis, such as threats to security and safety of the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has been struck by 206 ballistic missiles and more than 68,000 other projectiles, resulting in the deaths of 112 persons and hundreds of wounded among the civilian population.

Concerning the latest military operations in Al-Hudaydah, I recall resolution 2216 (2015), which in paragraph 1 calls on the Houthis to withdraw from cities under their control and refrain from any actions that are the prerogatives of the legitimate Government. We hope that the upcoming round of consultations will lead to a political solution based on the three previously agreed terms of reference, so as to end the crisis and restore security and stability in Yemen.

With regard to the humanitarian and economic developments, we are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Yemen, as Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley briefed us, warning of food insecurity soon, while 14 million of the brotherly Yemeni people would be at risk of that threat. The reason is the failure to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and the persistent armed conflict, which has created a war-time economy, marked by the inability to disburse citizens' salaries and deterioration in the buying power of the national currency as a result of the unprecedented collapse of the rate of exchange of Yemeni rial against foreign currencies. The international community must therefore shoulder a major responsibility to provide the Yemeni Government with the needed assistance in order to ensure the success of its policy to prevent a further deterioration of the national currency and be able to continue to pay salaries across Yemen.

In that connection, we commend the significant and continuing role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which on several occasions has disbursed considerable amounts of money to the Central Bank of Yemen, totalling approximately $3.2 billion. In addition, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of the United Arab Emirates, in coordination with UNICEF, have also made $75 million available to support the payment of salaries for more than 135,000 teachers across Yemen.

That economic assistance has made significant improvement in the exchange rate of the Yemeni rial against foreign currencies. Despite the constructive role of the Yemeni Government in that regard, and given the growing challenges, it has responded to the appeals by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs by suspending the implementation of its Decree 75 of 2018 owing to its potential to hinder imports. The Government has also confirmed its willingness to continue to cooperate with United Nations agencies and bodies.

The brotherly Yemeni people continue to bear humanitarian suffering despite the great financial and in-kind contributions from the international community, which most recently included the holding of a donor conference in Geneva in April. Kuwait donated $250 million at the conference for United Nations field agencies and international organizations working in Yemen. That was in addition to the flexible and cooperative role of the joint leadership of the coalition States, which issued more than 67,000 permits to ensure aid delivery throughout Yemen. The international community explains that the reason for the continued humanitarian suffering in Yemen is rooted in the deliberate attempts to block, seize and loot such assistance. We welcome the Secretary-General's determination, as stated by Mr. Lowcock in his briefing, to convene a conference in February 2019 in order to support the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Kuwait looks forward to participating in that conference.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait reiterates its belief that there can only be a political solution to the crisis in Yemen. We are keen to support the political operation that will put an end to the suffering of our brotherly Yemeni people. Kuwait has expressed its readiness to provide logistical support to ensure the participation of all in the round of consultations to be held in Stockholm. We will also continue to support the efforts of Special Envoy Griffiths and all other efforts based on the three political terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015). That would ensure Yemen's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, as well as Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings, which provide us with

a very clear framework for analysis and action. I also thank Mr. Beasley and Ms. Jarhum for their important briefings on the situation in Yemen, which is more worrisome than ever.

France believes that, when confronted with the increasingly devastating humanitarian tragedy in Yemen, we have the collective responsibility, and now an opportunity, to put an end to the war and pave the way for a political solution. Despite the scope of the problems, there is a window of opportunity today that the Security Council must take advantage of by doing all it can to support the necessary cessation of hostilities and the Special Envoy's mediation efforts. In that connection, I would like to turn to the situation in Al-Hudaydah, which is the tipping point for the situation in Yemen, and touch upon the constant deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

Recent clashes and bombardments, which have claimed the lives of many people, are endangering civilians, especially women and children, as well as endangering civilian infrastructure and blocking aid delivery routes. The ongoing daily deterioration of the humanitarian situation is pushing us ever closer to total disaster, while the latest estimates point to widespread famine, a large-scale cholera epidemic and the possibility that several generations of Yemenis will be completely deprived of an education. In that respect, military pauses are a means of reducing the intensity of clashes and fostering a positive climate for the resumption of political discussions, but it is clear that we must go further.

My second point is that it is more important than ever to respond to Mr. Lowcock's five specific asks. That must be our top priority. The Council must call for a lasting cessation of hostilities as soon as possible and ensure respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, especially if it is critical to the country's economy. The access and delivery of humanitarian aid and imports, including between Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah, as well as the stabilization and recovery of the Yemeni economy, are essential, as was so eloquently voiced earlier.

Humanitarian and medical personnel who operate in a high-risk environment must not only be protected, but must be able to plan their operations and implement them safely. I would like to reiterate our full support for the efforts of humanitarian actors, who work in particularly difficult conditions. We also commend the work of the United Nations and all the teams involved to develop a single road map on the humanitarian dimension in relation to the World Bank, the humanitarian response plan and the new Famine Early Warning Systems Network, which must be adequately financed, as Mr. Lowcock indicated. Finally, I would like to reiterate France's full support for Special Envoy Griffiths. I thank him for his tireless efforts to resume negotiations in order to reach an inclusive and lasting political solution. France resolutely stands with Mr. Griffiths.

We believe, again, that there is now a real window of opportunity to relaunch a credible political process — the only solution to the crisis in Yemen. The humanitarian tragedy looming over the country must compel us to act. As the Special Envoy indicated, several obstacles have been removed, such as the sensitive issue of the evacuation of wounded Houthis, which is an important step towards ensuring that the Houthis are present at the negotiating table. We therefore encourage the Special Envoy to continue discussions with all parties with a view to making further progress on confidence-building measures. The momentum must be maintained. We are ready to collaborate on a draft resolution to respond to the humanitarian emergency by fully endorsing Mr. Lowcock's five asks and supporting the efforts of Mr. Griffiths to reach a sustainable, comprehensive and inclusive agreement. In that connection, as Ms. Jarhum noted, women's participation in resolving the Yemeni crisis is essential.

We therefore call on the parties to engage with the Special Envoy immediately, without conditions and in good faith. We call on all those involved to facilitate that work, and we welcome the recent announcements of support for the United Nations process made by stakeholders in the region. The quest for a solution is becoming more urgent every day. For millions of Yemenis, it is now a very real question of life or death. France will remain fully committed in that regard.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Mr. Mark Lowcock, Mr. David Beasley and Ms. Rasha Jarhum for their briefings.

We first want to note the reduction of violence around the Yemeni port of Al-Hudaydah. We believe it is essential to work to establish a full, countrywide cessation of hostilities, which is important not only to ensure the reliable delivery of humanitarian and

commercial goods to the northern areas of Yemen where the majority of the country's population lives, but also to achieve the successful implementation of the Special Envoy's plans to hold a round of negotiations in Sweden. We welcome the progress that Mr. Griffiths has made in getting the parties to resume a dialogue and show flexibility on confidence-building measures, including the exchange of prisoners and other steps. We hope the planned talks will be substantive and help to make the political process sustainable. We do not expect the disagreements to end quickly. Years of confrontation have created a gulf that will not be easy to bridge. We will continue to assist Mr. Griffiths through bilateral channels, in our capacity as a permanent member of the Security Council and also a member of the group of 19 States supporting international efforts for a settlement in Yemen.

Our position remains the same. We continue to call for a plan for a negotiated solution to the conflict in Yemen. The parties must show restraint and refrain from resorting to force. The history of the Yemeni conflict shows that the military efforts are not working. Every day of war cranks up the cost of Yemen's post-conflict reconstruction. We condemn the indiscriminate strikes on civilian targets and ballistic-missile attacks on Yemen's neighbours. We support ensuring unconditional compliance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and unfettered humanitarian access to all parts of the country. The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains critical. A majority of the population is in need of assistance of one sort or another. Millions of Yemenis are starving and have no way of obtaining the medical services and medicines they need. We must make humanitarian assistance to Yemen a priority in our joint work and it must be provided on a non-discriminatory basis, regardless of who controls the territories where Yemenis live.

The international community is actively assisting the people of Yemen. While Russia is contributing to that effort, like many other Member States, we realize that it is impossible to improve the situation in Yemen through humanitarian measures alone. The solution must be a political one. We now need to unite around the Special Envoy and help him work proactively with all of the actors involved in the Yemeni conflict. The war is only playing into the hands of the various terrorists who have been taking advantage of the chaos to strengthen their positions in central and southern Yemen. The fight against terrorism is our shared task and we must take every possible measure to end its threat.

In conclusion, we want to express the hope that policies of confrontation, threats and pressure through sanctions will give way to collective efforts to create regional dialogue mechanisms, as well as a comprehensive and indivisible security architecture in the Middle East, both for the Arab States of the Persian Gulf and their neighbours. Russia's vision in that regard remains relevant and much needed.

Mr. Ipo (Cote d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Martin Griffiths, Mr. Mark Lowcock, Mr. David Beasley and Ms. Rasha Jarum for their informative briefings on the latest developments in the political and humanitarian situations in Yemen.

After four years of fighting in Yemen, the civilian population is now facing a true humanitarian tragedy. Millions of Yemenis are living under the threat of food insecurity and are prey to famine and malnutrition, while civilians with no access to safe drinking water and basic or emergency health care are dealing with waterborne diseases and the risk of epidemics. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its deep concern about the intensified fighting, as a result of which the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. We welcome and encourage the efforts of United Nations bodies and agencies to bring an end to the deadly clashes and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and emergency relief.

In view of this deplorable and disturbing situation, we reaffirm our support for all the international community's initiatives to resolve the crisis in Yemen. In that regard, we call on all the parties to the conflict to participate in the consultations soon to be held in Stockholm, led by Special Envoy Griffiths, to whom we affirm our full support. In that regard, my country calls on the opposing parties to observe the ceasefire in the port city of Al-Hudaydah, the epicentre of the crisis, to allow both for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and for giving peace a chance. We also urge all the Yemeni parties to fully engage in frank negotiations and make the compromises needed to achieve a lasting settlement to the crisis within the framework of the parameters established by the Security Council.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire calls for united action by the Council with a view to reaching a peaceful and

definitive settlement to the conflict as soon as possible and in the interests of the people.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank all of our briefers. I really want to echo the point made by my United Kingdom colleague about what a powerful message they have passed on to us again today. I thank them and their colleagues on the ground for all the work they are doing — and that includes Ms. Rasha Jarum — to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people and bring an end to that war.

During the most recent Council meeting on Yemen on 23 October (see S/PV.8379), Mr. Lowcock warned that 14 million people — half of the Yemeni population — could risk famine if the military escalation and economic crisis continued. Should we reach that point, he added, most of the innocent civilians losing their lives would be women and children. Since then, and despite those warnings, the situation has deteriorated further, as we have just heard. The armed conflict has intensified, with dramatic increases in air strikes, shelling, attacks and fighting in residential areas. I want to express our huge appreciation for the work of all the humanitarian agencies that are operating under those terribly difficult circumstances. With civilians getting caught in the crossfire and civilian infrastructure coming under attack, there have been scores of civilian casualties. Hundreds of thousands of Yemen's most vulnerable citizens are now trapped in active conflict zones, and in Al-Hudaydah more than half of them are children. There have also been further disruptions to the life-saving distribution network of humanitarian and commercial goods.

To the extent that there is a certain lull in the attacks, it must be sustained. A continued offensive would only prolong the suffering of the Yemeni people and move us further from a negotiated political settlement. As we have heard, we have a window of opportunity right now, and our focus must be on ending the fighting and getting the parties to the table. Political consultations, led by the Special Envoy, represent our best chance of reaching a turning point in the conflict, moving towards a political solution and alleviating the suffering. We must focus on that joint objective immediately.

Today, our briefers from the United Nations have again put the ongoing tragedy on our desks, as well as presenting us with the immediate steps needed to save lives, improve the humanitarian situation and create the conditions necessary for a political solution. As stated before, we fully support the five interventions outlined by Mark Lowcock and their individual and collective endorsement. We look forward to working with everyone to translate that commitment into a Security Council resolution and we stand ready in that regard. We believe that there is strong unity in the Council around such requests. We now need to rally behind the following.

The first step is a cessation of hostilities around infrastructure and facilities for humanitarian aid and commercial imports. All parties have the responsibility to protect civilians and civilian objects and to take all feasible steps to prevent and minimize harm, particularly to schools, medical care and humanitarian personnel.

Secondly, the parties must be called upon to engage in good faith with the political consultations brought about by Martin Griffiths. It will be important to ensure the representation and effective participation of women in that process from the start for all the reasons mentioned by Ms. Jarhum today.

Thirdly, it is important to ensure humanitarian and commercial access. Yemen's ports and roads must be kept open and safe. All parties are obliged to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure humanitarian access.

Fourthly, it is necessary to pursue confidence-building measures, including those relating to Sana'a airport, the Central Bank of Yemen and other economic measures, as well as prisoners. Mr. Griffiths also has our strong support in all that he is doing in that regard.

The futile war in Yemen has been going on for far too long, leading to immense suffering and thousands dead. The recent developments provide a window of opportunity that must now be seized. A united and active Security Council can make a difference. Our focus should be on supporting the United Nations efforts to immediately address the dire humanitarian situation and on ensuring that the political consultations get off to a good start.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and the important briefings by Martin Griffiths, Mark Lowcock, David Beasley and Rasha Jarhum, who, from different perspectives, have agreed in describing a distressing situation that needs the urgent support of

the international community and the rapid action of the Security Council.

Peru notes with deep concern the destructive cycle that has taken root in Yemen, where spiralling violence such as that seen in recent weeks is followed by brief periods of tense calm, while the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today and regional instability continue to worsen. Approximately 22 million people, three of every four Yemenis, require humanitarian assistance. The extreme vulnerability of the population, exacerbated by the collapse of public services and the economy, is claiming more lives than military action and creating conditions conducive to violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

As was pointed out to us, the situation is particularly fragile in Al-Hudaydah, which, even before the most recent escalation, saw the worst conditions in terms of food and health care, including 100,000 cases of girls and boys under 5 years of age with severe acute malnutrition. Many of the 300,000 civilians left in the city live in the worst conditions, unable to pay the cost of transport to flee the fighting. The bombings in recent weeks have continued to cause fatalities, including children, and to destroy the health infrastructure.

We deplore the evil pursuit of the conflict and the repeated violations of international humanitarian law that have been committed by all parties, while the Security Council has failed to fully assume its responsibility to protect the civilian population by imposing a humanitarian ceasefire and ensuring due accountability.

We wish to express our full support for every humanitarian worker of the United Nations and the other agencies deployed in Yemen and to once again emphasize the moral and legal duty to allow their full access to those in need. At the same time, we must point out that that will be possible only as we make progress on the political track.

The looming widespread famine and the exponential increase in cases of cholera and other diseases show the urgent need to acknowledge with deeds and actions, not only with words, that there is no military solution to the conflict, as well as the necessity for consistency in prioritizing the protection of civilians.

That requires the Yemeni parties committing to participating without preconditions and in good faith in inclusive negotiations sponsored by the United Nations. We therefore welcome the fact that the members of the coalition and other actors involved in the conflict have decided to support that course of action with the meeting to be held in Sweden in the coming days.

We also emphasize that the members of the Council are united in supporting a political solution and in believing that that is possible. That should spur us to express our full support to Mr. Griffiths, emphasizing the need to act rapidly, pragmatically and fairly.

We also emphasize the urgent need for the Council and the parties to the conflict to meet Mr. Lowcock's five requests, including implementing an immediate cessation of all hostilities, and to ensure full access for the humanitarian assistance and commercial goods needed by the population.

We wish to highlight the important steps taken recently by countries with influence over the parties aimed at building the necessary trust to bring the parties closer together and take the conflict back to the negotiating table as soon as possible. We particularly welcome the confidence-building measures that the Special Envoy has been supporting, such as the transfer of the wounded and the exchange of prisoners.

I conclude by reaffirming Peru's commitment to achieving a sustainable peace in Yemen and our full support for the swift adoption of a resolution by the Council that would help to put an end to one of the worst humanitarian tragedies created not by nature but by the violence and callousness of humankind itself.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to begin by thanking all the briefers for their valuable contributions to our discussion today. My particular thanks go to Mr. Griffiths for his continued efforts to relaunch the political process in Yemen. Poland holds in the highest regard his engagement with the parties to the conflict, the relevant stakeholders and civil society in order to pave the way for a political dialogue in Yemen.

As Yemen is on the brink of the worst famine in 100 years and military operations are escalating despite the looming humanitarian catastrophe, we now find ourselves on the verge of a disaster. The conflict cannot continue any longer. Thinking that it can be solved by military means and by the use of force is a delusion. Instead, what is urgently needed to avert the human-caused catastrophe is diplomacy, mediation, the engagement of all the relevant parties and regional countries and the meaningful support of

the international community, including the Security Council. We can no longer limit ourselves to meetings in the Chamber and discussions of the disastrous situation in Yemen without taking concrete actions. Words will not save the lives of the Yemeni children who die from hunger and disease on a daily basis.

History shows that where there is a will, there is a way. We therefore strongly urge all parties to the conflict to show goodwill, flexibility and readiness to compromise and to engage with the Special Envoy without preconditions. We call on all relevant stakeholders to make progress on confidence-building measures and to participate in the next round of consultations under the auspices of the United Nations. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our full support for Mr. Griffiths, in particular his vision for the political consultations. We also express our appreciation for the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the members of the Council aimed at creating conditions conducive to peace consultations. We are also ready to engage constructively in negotiations on the draft resolution proposed by the United Kingdom.

The catastrophic humanitarian situation in Yemen, as thoroughly described by Under-Secretary-General Lowcock, and the continuing deterioration of security conditions in the country require decisive and unified action by the Council. Therefore, we express our full support for the five points raised by Mr. Lowcock during the briefing on 23 October (see S/PV.8379) and urge their swift implementation.

We particularly call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, especially in and around the infrastructure and facilities on which humanitarian operations and commercial deliveries rely. We remain gravely alarmed by the recent escalation of fighting in the city of Al-Hudaydah. We urge both the Houthis and the coalition to immediately de-escalate and cease all military activities in the whole governorate. I would like to stress once again that Al-Hudaydah constitutes a critical supply chain for humanitarian and commercial deliveries. Any disruption of that vital lifeline will contribute significantly to the spread of famine, thereby putting the lives of millions of Yemenis in jeopardy. We condemn in the strongest terms all actions that impede the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen, as well as the transfer, storage and distribution of life-saving supplies.

Moreover, I would like to stress the imperative for the following actions to be immediately taken by all the parties to the conflict: guaranteeing unimpeded access and movement for vital imports into and across the whole country, ensuring the full and sustained functioning of all Yemen's ports and the Sana'a airport, respecting the principles of international humanitarian law and the ensuring of the protection of civilians, respecting the principles of proportionality and distinction, and, finally, ensuring the inclusion and involvement in the peace process of all relevant groups of Yemeni society, including meaningful participation by women in peace consultations.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that all the parties to the conflict in Yemen and regional actors have reiterated their commitment to finding a political solution to the conflict and their readiness to return to the negotiating table. The time has come to live up to those declarations.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I especially thank today's briefers for their exceptionally sobering, compelling and powerful presentations. As always, we are grateful for the hard work that they and their teams do on the ground every day in Yemen.

While these briefings add devastating clarity to our view of the crisis, they also reinforce the central lesson from over four years of conflict: the only enduring solution to this man-made — yes, man-made — crisis is a political settlement. This war must end soon, and it will not end on the battlefield. As United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has made clear, the United States seeks a cessation of hostilities in Yemen.

With that lesson in mind, the United States renews its call on parties to the conflict to engage with Special Envoy Griffiths as soon as possible, and its call on all Member States to assist. We are fully supportive of the Special Envoy's work to bring the parties to the table for consultations to discuss a framework for a political settlement to this war. The parties need to stop debating conditions for talks, and instead sit down at the table and engage on the Special Envoy's reasonable proposals. We furthermore welcome the Special Envoy's offer to share the framework with the Council when appropriate.

We also welcome reports of progress towards allowing select wounded Houthis to travel to Oman for medical care. We expect that the coalition and Oman will do everything they can to support that arrangement.

Special Envoy Martin Griffiths has worked for months to build an environment conducive for the consultations to begin. The Houthis must reciprocate immediately, without additional preconditions, and agree to participate in political consultations with the coalition in Sweden as soon as possible.

As political talks take place, the parties must ensure that the flow of assistance and commercial goods remains unimpeded. Fighting around Al-Hudaydah has shown us the immense risk of escalation. It is irresponsible for the Houthis to place their fighters on the rooftops of hospitals, warehouses and other civilian infrastructure. Thousands of civilians are threatened by the fighting, and it is getting harder and harder to move supplies from the port to the Yemenis who need it.

It is particularly important that the parties take no steps that could make this precarious situation worse. The Houthis need to lift the wide range of bureaucratic obstacles that make deliveries of assistance difficult and stop interfering with United Nations relief efforts. Both sides of the conflict must help facilitate the movement of aid workers and journalists. The mistreatment of Baha'i and adherents of other religions must stop.

We also call on the Yemeni Government to work with its partners to stabilize the Yemeni rial and re-build the capacity of the Central Bank. It is critical that the Government avoid taking any steps, even inadvertently, that could make it harder for importers to get food and fuel into the country.

There can be no more excuses for delaying work on a settlement. We know that for the millions of Yemenis facing the risk of starvation and disease there is no substitute for immediate humanitarian relief. We commend the tireless efforts, in dangerous circumstances, by David Beasley, the World Food Programme and its implementing partners and Lise Grande and her team on the ground.

The United States will continue its leadership in supporting critical aid and efforts to address the economic crisis. We urge all Member States to join us in that work. It is work that must happen regardless of the state of the conflict. In the same vein, we remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations under the law of armed conflict, including the obligation to take all feasible precautions to minimize the risk of harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The Security Council remains deeply divided on many issues, but as we are hearing today, not so on Yemen. All of us around this table have emphasized a common theme: that the time for progress on the political track is now, that we stand behind Special Envoy Griffiths and his efforts and that we are united in our demand for Mr. Lowcock's five asks, including for unfettered humanitarian access and for a cessation of hostilities. The United States and the members of the Council will be watching the situation closely in the weeks to come, particularly whether the parties cooperate with the Special Envoy's work. We must all use our collective and individual influence to make sure that they do.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock, Executive Director David Beasley and Ms. Rasha Jarhum for their respective briefings, which highlighted how the humanitarian crisis and the fighting in Yemen remain a source of grave concern. We are indeed moved by their powerful speeches. Those of us who have experienced hunger of biblical proportions in the past heard them loud and clear. The four of them told us the facts on the ground. They spoke sincerely and allowed us to rediscover for ourselves how weak and vulnerable we are of our own making as humans. We believe it is high time to find a durable political solution that could sustainably address the daily suffering of millions of Yemenis.

While there was a marked increase in clashes at the beginning of this month, particularly in Al-Hudaydah city, causing civilian deaths and injuries and displacement, as well as the destruction of civilian facilities, we note that the intensity of the violence has now been reduced. Reports indicate that the coalition has halted its military operations in Al-Hudaydah. We hope that will lead to a sustained ceasefire.

The increasing number of voices calling for ending the war in Yemen lately is something that needs to be welcomed. As the Secretary-General stressed in his statement on 2 November,

> "on the political side, there are signs of hope. We must do all we can to maximize the chances for success."

We concur with the Secretary-General that the international community should act together to stop the violence and prevent an imminent humanitarian catastrophe.

We believe that that can be done by fully supporting the continued diplomatic endeavours of Special Envoy Griffiths. We appreciate that the Special Envoy has continued to make preparations for the upcoming round of consultations to revive the political talks. We also welcome the readiness of the parties to engage with him. In that regard, we underscore that the continued and sustained de-escalation of violence and restraint would be absolutely vital in order to create an enabling environment for the political process. We also encourage the United Nations to re-engage the parties on a negotiated outcome on the Al-Hudaydah port, which should remain open and operational, as it is a lifeline for millions of Yemenis.

We call on all parties to resolve their differences at the United Nations-facilitated political process, which we believe is the only solution to address the legitimate aspirations of the people of Yemen and respond to the legitimate security concerns of countries in the region. The Council should also continue to provide its political backing to the Special Envoy. In that regard, the unity of the Council is imperative.

While it is time to seize this opportunity to relaunch the political process, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners should also be supported as they continue to operate in extremely difficult circumstances. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has pointed out that the humanitarian movement and access to warehouses and people in need have become more difficult or impossible in some cases. Therefore, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access remains absolutely vital to enable them to provide the much-needed humanitarian assistance to all in need. The protection of civilians and civilian facilities is also critical. Protecting the supply of food and essential goods, addressing the economic difficulties, including the payment of civil servants, and increasing funding for humanitarian operations would also be critical to alleviate the humanitarian tragedy in Yemen.

In conclusion, for the sake of civilians, who have suffered enormously, it is time to accelerate coordinated efforts to revitalize the Yemeni-owned and Yemeni-led political process under the auspices of the United Nations, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015). The upcoming peace talks in Sweden will provide an opportunity to make progress. The parties must be called upon to demonstrate the necessary political will and commitment to participating in the talks.

The Council should be able to speak with one voice in calling for an end to the war in Yemen and the need to address the humanitarian situation as a matter of urgency. We look forward to engaging constructively in the upcoming discussions on the proposed draft resolution by the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefing delivered by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, whose presence we wish to take advantage of in expressing our full support for his tireless efforts to achieve a solution through dialogue to the conflict in Yemen. We are also grateful for the briefings delivered by Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme; and Ms. Rasha Jarhum.

The effect of the words of all the briefers cannot be called anything other than shame. The international community should be ashamed of the degree of suffering we have allowed, which continues in Yemen to this day. The historians of the future will be able to see the case of Yemen and will be able to study in this case everything that is wrong and failing in the economic, political, commercial and international relations mechanisms of the first decades of the twenty-first century. If we allow this country to continue on that course of destruction, suffering and death without taking effective and immediate action today, I believe that all of us will have many reasons to feel shame.

My delegation expresses its deep concern about the alarming escalation of violence in Yemen, especially the bombing and air strikes that have resulted from military campaigns in the city of Al-Hudaydah, which to date have generated more than 445,000 internally displaced persons. It is disturbing that, while by the end of 2017 the number of fatalities resulting from the conflict amounted to more than 10,000 people — according to official data published by the World Health Organization — at present, even without an official update, that number could have quintupled. Moreover, that statistic is dwarfed if we take into account the victims of diseases and hunger that this fully man-made humanitarian crisis is generating. On that point, it is worth reflecting on the technology and the origin of the weapons, missiles and bombs that are deployed in Yemen, which are being used in attacks against hospitals, markets, public spaces, buses full

of children and even wedding celebrations and are costing the lives of thousands of innocent civilians. If we want to talk about resolving the conflict in Yemen peaceably and through dialogue, then those transfers and sale of arms, missiles and bombs must stop. We appeal to the sense of humanity and responsibility of the international community in that regard.

We also regret that, as a result of clashes, access to the port of Al-Hudaydah has been compromised, while the planting of antipersonnel mines jeopardizes the integrity and safety of port workers as well as the humanitarian assistance that enters through the port. Due to this serious situation, several humanitarian aid agencies, including the World Food Program and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, can access neither the 51,000 metric tons of wheat that are stored in the Red Sea Mills nor to the warehouses where humanitarian assistance goods and articles are stored.

Also, according to a report by the United Nations Population Fund, the lives of more than 1,500 of the 10,000 pregnant women trapped in the middle of the clashes in the city of Al-Hudaydah could be put at risk if the only hospital in the city that can provide emergency care becomes inaccessible. We would refer to the Al-Thawra hospital, which was struck by the remains of a missile last week and which, despite the violence, continues to provide its services, including to 59 children, 25 of them in intensive care.

We remind the parties that any attack or military campaign that targets civilians, public spaces, homes or medical and educational centres, as well as the launching of missiles and the deployment of antipersonnel mines, run counter to international law and international humanitarian law. As such, those actions could constitute crimes against humanity that can be investigated and sanctioned by the corresponding international tribunals. On the other hand, we see with great concern that armed forces that are part of the coalition and have bases on Yemeni territory are repressing and causing fatalities among civilians who oppose their presence, as occurred in the Al-Mahrah governorate in recent days.

We reiterate that an attack or military campaign against the city and port of Al-Hudaydah would not only seriously affect the more than 22 million people currently in need of humanitarian assistance; it would also increase the number of such people to an unsustainable scale, thereby dangerously increasing the number of people at risk of famine from 8 to 13 million. We therefore call on the parties involved in the conflict to refrain from attacking or jeopardizing the security, integrity and operability of the port and the city of Al-Hudaydah, as well as restricting or preventing the deployment of humanitarian assistance. We also call on the Yemeni authorities to avoid restrictions or administrative obstacles affecting the entry of imports of essential foods such as wheat, rice, sugar and milk, among others. The military and military actions in Yemen only transgress and weaken the efforts that our Organization, and the Special Envoy in particular, has been making to establish a dialogue that brings the parties closer to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

The Council must therefore emphatically reiterate to the parties that compliance with its resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015), is mandatory. We therefore call on all of the actors and parties involved to end the violence immediately and engage in all the Special Envoy's initiatives to relaunch the dialogue to reach a political a solution that will satisfy the demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, with respect for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. To that end, the commitment of the parties without preconditions is essential.

In conclusion, we reiterate our delegation's support for the consultations and dialogue process initiated by the Special Envoy as an important step to steer the political negotiation process towards a peaceful resolution of the situation in Yemen.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme; and Ms. Rasha Jarhum, Founder and Director of the Peace Track Initiative Yemen, for their excellent, enlightening and poignant briefings.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is closely following the clashes that have characterized the power struggle in Yemen for years. Their persistence and development are worrisome to such a degree that they call for the increased attention of the members of the Security Council and the international community.

Despite all efforts carried out since its beginning, the situation of the civilian population has not seen any improvement in stability. Recently, Al-Thawra Hospital — the main health-care facility serving Al-Hudaydah — was shut down, and its patients fled owing to the proximity of the clashes related to the offensive of the Yemeni Government and its allies against the Houthi rebels. We are deeply concerned about the persistent and widespread insecurity encroaching upon the civilian population of the areas most affected by the conflict, who live in daily fear of being hit by a stray bullet and worried that members of their families will not return home after a day's work. In most cases marked by years-long deprivation, inability to pay for food, lack of health care and inability to attend school regularly, we would expect to see a people in the throes of desperation. Although they have been faced by that reality, we admire the fact that the people continue to do everything they can to draw on their energy and deal with the situation despite the fact that war and the fear of death continue to confront them daily.

My delegation calls on the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, while bearing in mind that, at the most recent Security Council meeting on this subject in October (see S/PV.8379), Mr. Lowcock spoke of the more than 5,000 recorded violations of international humanitarian law since late May — a significantly large number — including heavy civilian casualties and the destruction and damage to critical civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, electricity and water systems, markets, roads and bridges, among others. During that same meeting, he mentioned delays in issuing visas, restrictions on the importation of equipment and cargo, retractions of permits, interference in humanitarian assessment exercises, interference in monitoring and other obstructions that limit the ability of humanitarian agencies to provide vital assistance to innocent civilians.

Given the situation, we are convinced that hostilities in proximity to all infrastructure and facilities on which providing assistance and commercial imports depend must cease. It is undeniable that a humanitarian ceasefire would reflect the obligations of the parties to the conflict to uphold international humanitarian law and to do everything possible to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance. My delegation acknowledges and is grateful for the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and other agencies to attenuate the threat of cholera and famine, including WHO's delivery of cholera vaccines to more than half a million Yemenis in October.

In conclusion, we support the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy Griffiths. We believe that his initiative to launch the negotiation process is important to our shared goal of bringing peace to Yemen — a proposal that we hope will enjoy the full approval of the opposing parties to the conflict. We ask the members of the Council to remain united and support Mr. Lowcock's requests here so that they can work to the benefit of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): My delegation joins others in expressing thanks to Special Envoy Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock, Executive Director Beasley and social protection specialist Jarhum for their insightful, eloquent and informative updates. Kazakhstan is closely following the recent developments and would like to make three points today.

First, Kazakhstan expresses its grave concern about the humanitarian crisis, which has continued to worsen because of the recent military escalation and a severe and rapid economic crisis, bringing the country closer to the world's worst famine in more than a century, while endangering daily the lives of millions of people in Yemen. We were moved by the grave assessments of Mark Lowcock and David Beasley of the horrifying humanitarian situation in the country. Kazakhstan strongly supports the United Nations calls on all parties for a ceasefire, to safeguard civilian lives, prevent deaths and injuries, allow freedom of movement and protect hospitals, clinics and schools, in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. In that regard, we back all of Mr. Lowcock's five points to be implemented in order to avert a humanitarian disaster.

Secondly, we urge all parties in Yemen to find compromises and reject unilateral decisions that could harm the peace process. The search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict should be intensified, and an urgent, universal ceasefire must be reached without preconditions. The prospects for talks to end Yemen's devastating war have become more real after Saudi Arabia recently confirmed its willingness to evacuate 50 wounded Houthi fighters, as a confidence-building measure. Kazakhstan calls on the Yemeni parties to seize this opportunity to de-escalate tensions and to participate fully, constructively and in good faith in

order to build confidence among them and take a step towards ending the conflict. In that regard, we were encouraged by the Special Envoy's announcement of the agreement reached by three parties to the conflict on the exchange of prisoners of war and detainees.

Thirdly, we believe that a revamped, regional approach is needed to uphold the ceasefire and promote the peace process. We commend the Special Envoy's attempts to involve different States of the Middle East and the Gulf region in that process. We welcome the recent productive meetings of the Special Envoy with the Government of Yemen and regional players, including the senior leaders of the Houthi Ansar Allah movement, which will help to reach the desired agreement. The support of neighbouring countries is critical and must be sought to work for a violence-free Yemen. While working on the political front, the international community should focus equally on mobilizing resources for alleviating the humanitarian crisis. Ultimately, the negative impact of the economic crisis must be overcome with greater financial aid and investments in development to help Yemen reach stability.

Finally, Kazakhstan expresses its unconditional support for the Special Envoy's efforts and urges parties to engage in good faith and without preconditions in the political process. We agree with Rasha Jarhum that the involvement of women and civil society is important, and their recommendations should be taken into consideration. We also call upon the parties to the conflict to demonstrate flexibility in order to avoid disagreements and properly resolve complex issues. We believe that a negotiated, United Nations-facilitated political settlement, through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue, is the only solution, and that all measures must proceed in that direction. Kazakhstan is ready to work on the text of a relevant draft resolution to help resolve the Yemeni conflict.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): We thank Martin Griffiths, Mark Lowcock, David Beasley and Rasha Jarhum for their impressive and convincing briefings. They presented us with a grave description of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Their strong words underline the urgency of the Security Council's action and decision-making. They made it clear that we need a peaceful, sustainable political solution. In that context, I will focus on three issues — first, conflict and hunger; secondly, the responsibility of the international community; and, thirdly, the urgent need for a political solution.

On my first point, there is a vicious cycle of conflict and hunger in armed conflicts around the world. In May (see S/PV.8267), the Council unanimously adopted a resolution we facilitated (resolution 2417 (2018)) that called on all of us to break that cycle. In that context, the end of extreme hunger in Yemen ultimately depends on our collective political will.

The situation in Yemen is compounded by interference with United Nations depots, continued air strikes and indiscriminate shelling. Those attacks have led to damage to critical civilian infrastructure and to water, sanitation and health facilities, as Mr. Lowcock just described. In general, depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival — indeed, starving civilians intentionally as a method of warfare — is under no circumstance permissible; it may even constitute a war crime.

We took note of Mr. Lowcock's remarks about the current lull in the fighting around Al-Hudaydah, which must become permanent. The year-long partial blockade is already creating essential shortages. In the event of renewed escalation, the port of Al-Hudaydah might become inaccessible to any ship carrying commodities that are vital to a population in need. The port is an essential lifeline for millions of Yemeni people. On many occasions, we have also expressed our concern over Houthi missiles targeting civilians in Saudi Arabia. Those missiles attacks should stop.

That brings me to my second point — the responsibility of the international community. Secretary-General Guterres has said it very clearly: it is time to act. The international community must do its utmost to protect civilians in times of conflict. The most effective way to do so is for the Council to fully support the five requests from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Let me reiterate them and express how we see them.

First, as an initial step towards the full cessation of hostilities, a humanitarian cease-fire is the only way to prevent mass starvation. Secondly, in order to protect the supply of food and essential goods across the country, all routes need to be opened for those goods. Thirdly, we need a larger and faster injection of foreign exchange into the economy through the Central Bank. We welcome the recent injection, as Special Envoy Griffiths just described. Fourthly, the humanitarian

operation needs increased funding. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is doing its share in that regard. And, fifthly, there must be full engagement with the Special Envoy to end the conflict. The Council should support those five asks. We therefore welcome the announcement just made by the United Kingdom that it will circulate a draft resolution on Monday endorsing those five asks.

It is the Council's responsibility to take a firm stance against the persistent violations of international humanitarian law, like the ones we see on a daily basis in Yemen. We need to stand up for the brave humanitarian personnel; they should never be the target of attacks. Humanitarian access must not be politicized by the parties to the conflict. And all parties should make it possible for the United Nations to collect objective data in order to draw up reliable needs assessments based on the real needs of the people.

The international community should continue to raise its voice against impunity. Perpetrators must, and will, be held accountable, not only to provide justice for victims in the future but also to deter offences in the present. In that context, we are grateful for the ongoing work of the Human Rights Council's Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen and of the sanctions committee Panel of Experts on Yemen.

My third and final point is the need for a political solution. To respond to OCHA's fifth ask, I can say that both the European Union and the Netherlands fully support the tireless efforts of Mr. Griffiths to achieve a sustainable political solution. As others have said, all parties should participate in the talks in Sweden without preconditions. And they should work with Mr. Griffiths in good faith and in a constructive manner. The countries with influence over the parties to the conflict should use their position to ensure successful talks. The talks must be inclusive and should also address local grievances in Yemen. We commend Sweden for its willingness to host the talks, we thank Kuwait for its offer of logistical support and we thank Oman for its constructive role.

We thank Ms. Jarhum for her briefing, which underlined both the conflict's effect on women and the determination of women to contribute in a meaningful way to peace and a better Yemen. Resolution 1325 (2000) can guide us in that regard. First of all, the horrible violence against women and girls, as described by Ms. Jarhum, must stop, but that is not enough. We call on the parties to include women in their delegations. We are pleased that Mr. Griffiths has already attended meetings with a number of women representatives. The fact that the men are the ones fighting does not mean that only the men must make peace. We need the proud women of Yemen to be fully involved in the peace process. They know what is needed for all of the people of Yemen.

In conclusion, we are extremely concerned about the millions of Yemeni people on the brink of starvation. We call on all parties to work together to make humanitarian access possible and to bring about a humanitarian ceasefire now so that people in need can be reached. It is urgent that the Council support OCHA's five asks. Following the advice of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, we also call upon the international community, including the countries of the League of Arab States, to stop delivering arms to this theatre of war and its main combatants. We must now focus on immediately addressing the famine and finding a peaceful and sustainable political solution to this terrible conflict. The Council should fully support the efforts of Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Griffiths. That is what the people of Yemen need from the Council.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Executive Director Beasley for their comprehensive, timely and convincing briefings. I highly appreciate their unrelenting efforts to restore peace and stability and improve the humanitarian situation in Yemen. I also wish to thank Ms. Rasha Jarhum for her briefing.

At present, the political security and humanitarian situation remains grave in Yemen. The recent escalation in the armed conflict in the country has not only led to civilian casualties, but also destroyed roads, hospitals and other infrastructure. Moreover, it has hampered humanitarian assistance and further increased the risk of famine and the spread of cholera. We are truly saddened by the suffering of the Yemeni people, and we express our concern about the situation in Yemen.

Yemen's problems can be resolved only politically. Military means cannot achieve lasting peace. The international community should safeguard Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, support the mediation efforts of the United

Nations and arrive at an inclusive solution through dialogue and negotiation, based on resolution 2216 (2015), the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, and the outcome documents of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference.

We welcome the recent efforts of the international community and Special Envoy Griffiths to advance the peace process in Yemen. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Special Envoy and the relevant parties, progress has been made on such issues as the release of prisoners and the evacuation of the injured, thereby creating conditions for dialogue. The Special Envoy has conducted intensive shuttle diplomacy. Closely engaged with the relevant parties on this matter, he has encouraged them to meet each other halfway and to return to the negotiating table. The Special Envoy is working to advance a framework for political negotiation, and China appreciates his efforts.

The Security Council and the relevant parties remain united and continue to support the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy, including intensified efforts to promote peace and dialogue and to nudge parties in Yemen to put aside their differences with a view to starting a new round of peace talks in Sweden as soon as possible. We urge parties in Yemen to work closely with Special Envoy Griffiths to return to the track of dialogue as soon as possible and to sustain their participation in negotiation. We call on the international community and countries in the region to continue their constructive assistance to that end.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen has attracted the close attention of the region and the world at large. The international community should increase humanitarian assistance and assist in a targeted way by providing goods such as food and medication as well as funding support to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. The international community should also support Yemen in its efforts to improve its economy, stabilize prices, ensure safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access and meet the basic needs of the Yemeni people.

We welcome the indefinite postponement by the Yemeni Government of restrictions on certain imports. China will continue to work with the international community to jointly and expeditiously bring the issue of Yemen back on the track to seeking a political settlement so as to achieve peace, security and stability in Yemen as soon as possible.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Binmubarak (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of November. I wish you and the friendly delegation of China every success. I would also like to thank you for giving us an opportunity to speak before the Council. I also thank Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley for their briefings and for their efforts.

I would like as well to thank the humanitarian workers, in particular local teams present on the ground in Yemen. I thank the activists, humanitarian workers and our sister Ms. Rasha Jarhum, and through her Yemeni women, who deserve our gratitude given their steadfastness despite the suffering and difficulties inflicted upon them.

We are meeting today at a time when the humanitarian situation in my country is more difficult than ever. It is deteriorating from one day to the next. I will not go into the reasons, but the Council knows that the situation is the result of certain factors. That is why we cannot stop this disaster without considering its causes.

I would briefly like to address the economic, humanitarian and political situation on the ground so as to move together towards lasting solutions and understand who is working for peace, stability and ending the suffering of Yemenis and who, on the contrary, is hindering peace.

From its provisional capital in Aden, the Yemeni Government has undertaken a series of economic measures with the assistance of the Economic Committee and the Central Bank. One of those measures is Decree 75, which aims to put an end to the deterioration of the economy and the depreciation of the national currency. Those measures have allowed for an increase in the exchange rate of the Yemeni rial. It is now 648 rials to the dollar, as compared recently to 860 rials to the dollar.

Decree 75 also aims to put an end to the smuggling of oil-derived products on the black market at double the price, while also allowing Yemeni traders to enjoy a preferential exchange rate for the rial to the dollar. The Central Bank is thereby trying to control the exchange rate so that citizens can access essential foodstuffs at a reasonable price instead of having to resort to the

black market and get them at high price. However, the Federation of Yemen Chambers of Commerce and Industry, upon the request of humanitarian organizations, has suspended its mechanism for the approval of foodstuff imports so as to facilitate their entry and enhance the foodstuff reserves in the various governorates.

The Central Bank has facilitated the issuance of letters of credit for foodstuffs across Yemen. That was made possible by Saudi deposits. We have thereby been able to finance the import of wheat, rice and other essential foodstuffs to the amount of $266 million. Seventy-five per cent of those foodstuffs have been delivered to governorates that are controlled by the Houthi militias. Indeed, the Government of my country gives the same treatment to all our citizens without any discrimination.

In the light of the economic difficulties in my country and urgent needs of the population, we call on United Nations agencies in Yemen to address themselves solely the Yemeni Central Bank — and the commercial banks that are under its supervision — for all financial transfers to Yemen. We also expect that international humanitarian organizations working in Yemen will support our economy by purchasing the various products and foodstuffs from our local markets. That would strengthen the Yemeni currency and allow the Central Bank to carry out its oversight functions, in particular when it comes to implementing international resolutions concerning sanctions, the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. That will also allow for the creation of jobs and help strengthen the private sector, on which more than 6 million Yemeni citizens depend.

The Yemeni Government welcomes the Riyadh declaration of 14 November, which aims to identify the necessary and urgent measures to resolve the economic and humanitarian situation in Yemen with the support of brotherly and friendly countries, in order to provide the salaries for all civil servants in Yemen based on 2014 data. I would like to thank the coalition countries and all brotherly and friendly countries that have supported our country's economy. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has provided more than $60 million on a monthly basis to support oil-derivative products for power generators, achieve rial stability and combat money laundering in oil products, which constitute more than 60 per cent of the demand on foreign currency in Yemen. Meanwhile, Iran continues to support Houthi militias with ballistic missiles and land and sea mines, which are used against our people and neighbouring countries. That is a serious violation of Security Council resolutions, according to the reports issued by the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

On the humanitarian and political front, the Government of my country is committed to international law, international humanitarian law and human rights. We call upon the international community to put pressure on Houthi militias to allow for the quick and safe delivery of humanitarian assistance and to help humanitarian workers get access to the different regions of the country in order to deliver medical and humanitarian assistance to those who are in need of them. The Houthi militias must respect and protect schools and medical facilities, and they must not use Yemeni civilians as human shields or recruit children to send them to the battlefields.

Our people have had enough of constantly hearing talk of the violations that they are subjected to and the crimes committed against them by the Houthi militias. Suffering is inflicted upon our people on a daily basis, and the Yemenis are bitter when they see the blood of their children spilled by executioners that go unpunished. Our victims are killed twice. The first time by criminal militias and their leaders, and the second time when those crimes are ignored and the militias are allowed to continue the conflict. Victims of children and women are saying: "Do not kill us twice".

How can those who seek true peace fail to participate in the peace consultations? How can those who seek true peace take civilians, doctors and patients as human shields? How can those who seek true peace lay millions of land mines? How can those who seek true peace recruit children and youngsters who are the pillars of the future and send them to death? How can those who seek true peace besiege populated cities and their snipers kill children and women daily? How can those who seek true peace kidnap journalists, activists and teachers, throw them into prison and torture them?

I would like to respond to what Mr. Beasley said a while ago about the need for foodstuffs. The Houthi militias have just set fire to foodstuff depots belonging to a Yemeni company in Al-Hudaydah, despite suspending military operations. According to documented and media reports, Houthi militias have recruited thousands of children and taken hostage

doctors and patients of the 22 May Hospital in Al-Hudaydah. They have used those people as human shields and laid millions of mines in buildings, on roads and even in trees, according to the Associated Press. Mines have even been laid in Al-Hudaydah port at a time when they have besieged the city of Taiz for more than three years. The Houthi militias kill more women and children in Taiz every day through shelling and sniping.

The city of Taiz is waiting for international organizations to visit with delegations so that our children can tell them about their suffering. Two children, Hani Al-Ra'i, who was six years old, and Jalal Abdul Khaleq, who was eight years old, were killed by Katyusha rockets launched by Houthi militias. Nobody knows who they were; nobody knows their names. Farid Shawqi, who was five years old, cried out after being hit by a Houthi shell. He kept shouting "do not leave me", and yet he regrettably died. Dozens of other children are killed in Yemen every day as a result of sniping or shelling. Unfortunately, nobody remembers those children.

The Yemeni Government, on the other hand, has made considerable efforts, through the office of the Special Envoy, to reach an agreement on the exchange of prisoners, in particular arbitrarily detained persons, as well as those under house arrest. The Government has accepted the exchange of Houthi prisoners with those people who were arrested for nothing to do with the war. We agreed to do so because we know that our prisoners are living in extremely difficult conditions. We are ready to accept all proposals pertaining to confidence-building measures. We are ready to take all measures that would help build confidence and alleviate the suffering of our people. We appreciate the sincere efforts of the Special Envoy in this regard.

The people of Yemen expect the Security Council to do more than simply denounce the situation, issue statements and even adopt resolutions. What we expect is that the resolutions of the Council will be translated into concrete action on the ground. We still have an opportunity to reach peace. We actually have thousands of opportunities to reach just, comprehensive, sustainable and genuine peace on the basis of the three agreed terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, and the relevant Security Council resolutions, notably resolution 2216 (2015). We need peace in order to put an end to the consequences of the coup d'état that my country has suffered and to restore States institutions. Heavy and medium weapons must be surrendered to the legitimate military institution, which has the exclusive right to own such weapons.

The Yemeni Government reiterates its position in support of the efforts of the Special Envoy to achieve peace. He intends to hold a new round of consultations, hoping that the coup party would participate in good faith in order to discuss the confidence-building measures which are proposed by the Special Envoy.

His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour and the Yemeni Government are working hard, sincerely and in good faith to achieve peace because Yemen is the country of civilization, history and wisdom. Yemen deserves to live in dignity, peace and prosperity while united, strong and independent. We will never accept Iranian influence or the replication of the Iranian experience in our country.

The Council should stop cursing the darkness of war and humanitarian tragedies. It has to light the candle of peace and silence the guns forever.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.